DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE EFFORTS AND CYBERBULLYING BY SCHOOL LEVEL: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

Sam Houston State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

By

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May, 2021

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my maternal grandfather, Eugene Pearson, and my youngest brother, Damiyon Derrow. Eugene Pearson strongly believed in the value of education. At the age of seven, my grandfather would ask me to read the Bible with him due to his Grade 3 education. He would remind me daily that I would have to get all of "the smarts" that I could because he wanted me to be a "doctor" one day.

I was a freshman in high school when my youngest brother, Damiyon Derrow was born on June 1, 1995. After college, I married my high school sweetheart, Darrien Price. The twins, Kayla and Darrien, came shortly thereafter. When my husband and I moved our immediate family to Houston, Texas after the twins turned three years old, Damiyon packed his belongings and moved in with us. He would often tell me how proud he was that I had numerous degrees. One of the last messages I received from my brother before his senseless death reads, "I love you sis! You are my motivation!" Little did Damiyon know, he motivated me to be his role model as I continued to break glass ceilings to show him what he had the capacity to do as well.

ABSTRACT

Price, Shukella L., *Differences in school discipline efforts and cyberbullying by school level: A national analysis*. Doctor of Education (Educational Leadership), May, 2021, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

Purpose

The purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to determine the degree to which cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts were provided at different school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high). In the first journal article, the extent to which the frequencies of cyberbullying teacher trainings differ by school level was examined. In the second study, the extent to which factors that impede discipline efforts differ by school level was ascertained. In the third investigation, the degree to which relationships differ between other forms of harassment and cyberbullying by school level was examined. In each of the three studies, two years of national archival data were examined to ascertain the degree to which consistency was present in cyberbullying prevention and intervention by school level.

Method

For this empirical investigation, a non-experimental, causal-comparative research design was used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data that were analyzed herein were from the School Survey on Crime and Safety (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The independent variable consisted of school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) and the dependent variables were responses (i.e., teacher trainings, impeding factors, and other forms of harassment) to survey questions for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

Findings

Inferential statistical analyses were conducted to determine the extent to which differences were present in survey responses by school level. Discipline efforts with respect to cyberbullying were better in middle and high schools than in elementary schools. Elementary teachers received less trainings because of fewer cyberbullying incidents reported by students. Over one third of such trainings were not offered to elementary teachers, as well as one fourth of bullying trainings. The fewest trainings for intervention and referral strategies were provided to elementary teachers. More than one half of elementary and middle school teachers did not receive trainings for early warnings. Limited efforts regarding inadequate/lack of parent support were reported at the elementary school level for both school years. The fewest incidents for sexual harassments and harassment based on gender identity were reported at the elementary school level. Implications for policy and for practice were made, along with recommendations for future research.

KEYWORDS*:* Bullying; Cyberbullying; Cybervictim; Elementary schools; Gender identity; Harassment; High schools; Mental health; Middle schools; School Survey on Crime and Safety

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the strength and wisdom to complete such a tremendous task. It was truly a blessing to have the love and support of my husband, Darrien Price, during the years that I would spend hours researching my topic while he made sure Cameron and the twins, Kayla and Darrien, received a decent meal each day. Kayla and Darrien, Jr., thanks for understanding momma had to miss band showcases, track meets, and football games due to my determination to complete a goal. I truly appreciate the grace over the last few years. I thank Cameron for waiting up for me to review his sight words on Wednesday nights and making sure momma had quiet time to do her homework so that the teacher would not place "red marks" on my paper. I would like to thank my little brother, Victor "Pac-Man" McCoy, for his cheers throughout the years. I thank my mother, Catherine Derrow, who has supported me with my long-term goal to obtain a doctoral degree. Growing up in a single-parent home, my mother taught me how to develop a skillset that will allow me to become a personified version of a rose that can grow from the concrete. She is the real Most Valuable Person (MVP)!

I would like to thank my mentor Dr. Delic Loyde and my "board of trustees." Dr. Chanel Fields, her pursuit to reach for good fruit inspires me more than she knows. Soror Gia Williams-Doggett and Dr. Mikia Barnes, we met as sorority sisters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated and soon became family. I appreciate their listening ear whenever I called to share my milestones! Paula Cook, she has truly been the wind beneath my wings! I thank each of them for our long talks as they reminded me of the grit that I wear on my shoulder every day and the FAVOR that my GOD has given me.

The support and guidance are greatly appreciated. I am a better educator and leader because of them – True Story!

Dr. Mikia Barnes and Dr. John Williams deserve a special thanks for introducing me to a phenomenal dissertation committee at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Cynthia Martinez-Garcia, I thank her for serving as my dissertation chair and providing her listening ear whenever I had a new idea for my dissertation. I cannot thank her enough for grounding me when I wanted to change my topic for the third time! Dr. John R. Slate, half man and half machine, I thank him for motivating me to crunch numbers and perform analyses with my eyes closed. I am most grateful for the numerous hours he provided to ensure I made progress toward my goal. Dr. Wally Barnes, I thank him for his attention to details, support, and guidance. I cannot thank my committee enough for their time and patience as I found my way to the dissertation "finish" line.

Dr. Stacey Edmonson and Dr. Julie Combs, I am thankful for the incredible experience the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program has provided doctoral students who never thought they could be academic scholars at such an esteemed level. I would like to give a huge shout-out to Cohort 40! Thanks for the "family" time we spent together that was full of belly laughs and tears of joy. I look forward to the positive influence we will share during our educational careers.

Finally, a very special thanks to the Conroe Independent School District superintendents, principals, and staff who have supported me throughout my journey. The timely responses to emails and phone calls are much appreciated. A special thanks to Dr. Shellie Winkler who has served as a mentor during my program as she provided

leadership tasks and sound advice that has empowered me to be an effective leader in any learning environment.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the advent and increased use of technology in the 21st Century, cyberbullying has become pervasive. Hinduja and Patchin (2015) defined cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and electronic devices" (p. 11). Cyberbullying has been documented to have increased from 7.9% in 2010 to 12% in 2016, which is a 150% increase in daily/weekly cyberbullying over a 6-year period. The rate of harmful cyberbullying events is increasing because of the misuse of technology by cyberbully perpetrators (Davis & Schmidt, 2016).

Parents, educational leaders, teachers, and law enforcement officers should work together to implement cyberbullying prevention and intervention methods to keep boys and girls safe in cyberenvironments (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). School-age children should be taught to adopt digital safety strategies that will decrease their vulnerability to online aggressors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015) and that new knowledge will increase their self-efficacy. School communities must equip students with resources they may employ when a cyberbully perpetrator threatens their physical safety and/or mental health (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015).

Literature Review Search Procedures

For this journal-ready dissertation, the literature regarding cyberbullying as it relates to teacher training and discipline policies, factors that impede discipline efforts, and rates of other forms of harassment was examined. The following phrases were used in the search for relevant literature: *school level*, *elementary school, middle school, high school, cyberbullying, school safety, prevention and intervention, teacher training,*

discipline, mental health, and harassment. The searches were conducted through the EBSCO Host database for academic journals. Relevant articles were reviewed that pertained to school level and cyberbullying.

Key word searches for "school level" yielded 28,115 results, and by narrowing the search to include "elementary", the search was reduced to 14,333 articles. Adding cyberbullying to that search resulted in 11 articles. When "school level" and "middle school" were searched, 5,497 results displayed. Adding cyberbullying to that search resulted in 14 articles. When "school level" and "high school" were searched, 11,751 results displayed. Adding cyberbullying to that search resulted in 16 articles. When "school level" and "cyberbullying" were searched, 32 results displayed. A separate search was conducted for "school safety" and resulted in 7,154 articles. This number was reduced to 425 when "school level" was added. Key word searches for "school level" and "teacher training" yielded 1,469 articles. "School level" and "discipline" displayed 1,067 articles, whereas "school level" and "prevention and intervention" resulted in 365 articles. When "school level" and "mental health" were searched, 389 results displayed. Adding cyberbullying to that search resulted in 11 articles. When using the key words "school level" and "harassment", 57 articles were displayed. Relevant articles were reviewed pertaining to the authors relationship to school level and cyberbullying. Additionally, relevant articles were reviewed pertaining to intervention and prevention.

Review of the Literature on Cyberbullying and Teacher Training and Discipline Policies

Cyberbullying, defined as a repeated and willful harm inflicted through the use of cell phones, computers, and/or other electronic devices (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018), is a rapidly increasing phenomenon (Bauman, 2010). Prevalence rates regarding cyberbullying incidents range from 10% to 40% because boys and girls misuse technology. They digitally disseminate aggressive messages, pictures, and/or graphics they would not usually share with individuals face-to-face because of the small chance that their identity would be revealed (Kowalski, Limber, & McCord, 2019). The National Crime Victimization Survey documented an increase in approximately 5% of cyberbullying rates that were reported by students between 2009 and 2011 (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2014). Although the definition of cyberbullying and prevalence rates may differ across studies, researchers (Bauman, 2013; DePaolis & Williford, 2015; Stauffer et al., 2012; Tokunaga, 2010) agreed that cyberbullying is a pervasive problem that affects the daily lives of school-aged students.

Due to a dearth of research studies at the elementary school level, Olenik-Shemesh and Heiman (2014) investigated the prevalence of cyberbullying at elementary schools in Israel. In particular, they focused on the relationships between cybervictimization and student self-efficacy, social support, well-being, and sense of loneliness. A questionnaire was completed by 398 students in Grades 5 and 6 who were between the ages of 10 and 12. Approximately 80% of students used the Internet daily and 20.4% of cybervictimization was reported among students in this age group. Almost half, 45.7%, of students stated they knew someone who participated in cyberbully

behaviors, 5% stated they had cyberbullied another peer, and 45.6% reported they had witnessed another peer who had been cyberbullied.

Evidence that supported how often students were victims of cyberbullying behaviors was documented by DePaolis and Williford (2015) who examined the nature and prevalence of cyberbullying incidents. In their study, 660 Grade 3 through Grade 5 students from six different schools completed an online survey to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying in their elementary school setting. Almost all students reported they used internet services at home. Results of this online survey were that 11% of cyberbullying victims were involved in an incident weekly via online games, 32% of cyberbullying victims were bullied by text messages, and 21% of cyberbullying victims were bullied on social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram. Thirty-eight percent of cyberbullying victims knew the perpetrator, and almost 50% of the victims refused to tell anyone about cyberbullying incidents (DePaolis & Williford, 2015).

Regarding the frequency of cyberbullying incidents from the DePaolis and Williford (2015) study, victimization was reported by 14% of students in Grade 3, 15% of students in Grade 4, and 22% of students in Grade 5. Cyberbullying behaviors increased more than 5% between Grades 3 and 5. All student groups combined included 17% of students who were victims of cyberbullying at least once during the school year (DePaolis & Williford, 2015).

In an investigation in Indonesia, Safaria (2016) examined the occurrences of cyberbullying through surveying 102 Grade 7 students. Addressed in this investigation were the coping strategies of adolescents, psychological effects of cyberbullying, and the relationship between student online activity and the frequency of cyberbullying incidents.

Safaria (2016) established that almost 80% of the surveyed students were victims of cyberbullying occasionally to almost every day. Of the students surveyed, over 10% of them reported being a victim almost every day and over 25% indicated they were often a victim. Only 14% of students responded that they were never a victim of cybervictimization. Furthermore, Safaria (2016) determined that student gender was not a statistically significant factor in the frequency of cyberbullying victimization, although boys were documented to participate in statistically significant more cyberbullying acts than girls.

In a later investigation, Patchin and Hinduja (2019) surveyed 5,700 students between the ages of 12 and 17. Patchin and Hinduja (2019) defined cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (p. 2). Indicators that were used in the 2019 study regarding cyberbullying victimization included: mean or hurtful posts online about a student, mean or hurtful pictures online about a student, mean or hurtful videos online about a student, mean or hurtful web pages created regarding a student, online rumors regarding a student, online threats toward a student, and someone who pretended to be a student online to be mean or hurtful towards another student. In the 2016 survey used in this research, over 25% of the students stated they had been a victim of cyberbullying 30 days prior to completing the survey (Patchin & Hinduja, 2019). The most frequent cyberbullying incidents reported were mean or hurtful comments online (23%) and online rumors (20%).

In a 2019 follow-up survey using the same indicators, Patchin and Hinduja (2019) collected data from 4,972 students between the ages of 12 and 17. In the 30-day period

prior to completing the survey, 30% of the students had been a victim of cyberbullying. The most frequent cyberbullying incidents reported were mean or hurtful comments online (25%) and online rumors (22%). Girls were 5% more likely than boys to be a victim of cyberbullying via online rumors.

Sari and Camadan (2016) surveyed 286 high school students in Turkey to determine cyberbullying violence tendency between cyberbully perpetrators and cybervictims. Cyberbullying was defined as a "deliberate, repetitive, and permanent behavior pattern against defenseless victim mostly by an unknown group or individual through electronic environments such as text messages, picture/video clips, phone calls, emails, chat-rooms, instant messages, and websites" (Sari & Camadan, 2016, pp. 317-318). Using an inventory for cyberbullying behaviors and a violence tendency scale, the authors documented the presence of a statistically significant relationship between cyberbully perpetrators and violent behaviors. Sari and Camadan (2016) explained 12% of student violence tendency was related to cyberbullying behaviors for perpetrators and 6% of student violence tendency was related to cybervictims.

Similar to Sari and Camadan (2016), You and Lim (216) examined cyberbully perpetration among a sample of 3,449 randomly selected middle school students in Korea who participated in a 6-year longitudinal study. Presented in the data were predictors, such as student background variables (e.g., mother's and father's academic ability, family income, computer usage, mobile phone usage, gender, nontraditional family, and achievement), student experiences with bullying, and psychological factors (e.g., self-esteem, aggression, lack of self-control, sociality, and emotional regulation) that may affect the prevalence of cyberbullying behaviors. You and Lim (2016) determined that

students who had fathers with limited academic ability and who experienced offline bullying and victimization were at a higher risk of cyberbully perpetration. Also established in the study was that students who had prolonged exposure to the Internet, who had a high aggression level, and who lacked self-control were more likely to participate in cyberbully behaviors.

According to Schneider, O'Donnel, and Smith (2015) extended exposure to internet sources may increase the use of social networking applications that may be used in cyberbullying incidents. Schneider et al. (2015) compared cyberbullying victimization rates from survey items (i.e., cell phones, the Internet, or other electronic devices were used to bully, threaten, or tease) answered by 16,000 students in Grade 9 through Grade 12 who attended 17 Boston high schools between 2006 through 2012. Results indicated an increase in cyberbullying victimization rates at all grade levels. Cyberbullying behaviors increased from 15% to 21% during the 6-year period. Cyberbullying incidents increased more with girls (17% to 27%) than with boys (12% to 15%). One-third of the sample size told an adult when a cyberbullying incident occurred. For Grade 9 students, cyberbullying victimization increased from 16% in 2006 to 23% in 2012, Grade 10 cyberbullying increased from 16% in 2006 to 22% in 2012, cyberbullying in Grade 11 increased from 14% in 2006 to 20% in 2012, and Grade 12 cyberbullying increased from 12% in 2006 to 19% in 2012. Cyberbullying rates were reported by more Grade 9 and Grade 10 students than Grade 11 and Grade 12 students. Cyberbullying causes victims to commit devious and sometimes fatal acts of violence.

Bullying and harassment influenced the heinous acts of two bullying victims who entered Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and killed 12 classmates, a

teacher, and themselves. As a result of this deadly crime, school administrators have established more antibullying discipline policies (Clarke, 2017; Donegan, 2012) in which on-campus and off-campus bullying have to be addressed by school districts (Dryden, 2012). Although *Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent School District* allowed students to have free speech under the First Amendment, speech can be punished if the materials lead to substantial disruption or interferes with school activities (Erb, 2008). School administrators should foster teacher buy-in to improve the fidelity of cyberbullying intervention programs because boys and girls do not readily report cyberbullying incidents (DePaolis & Williford, 2015; Stauffer, Heath, Coyne, & Ferrin, 2012). Effective teacher training and discipline policies must be implemented to increase teacher awareness of cyberbullying incidents (Styron et al., 2016).

Teachers should be directly involved with developing and implementing discipline policies (Stauffer et al., 2012). School administrators must provide teachers with adequate time to implement cyberbullying prevention programs because they are interested in assisting school leaders with proactive strategies (Cunningham et al., 2016). Teacher perceptions of cyberbullying discipline policies are necessary when implementing effective school-based programs (Cunningham et al., 2016; Stauffer et al., 2012).

Preventative cyberbullying programs may decrease negative behaviors that cause students to harm themselves. As an example of how detrimental cyberbullying incidents can be, the Amanda Todd Case in 2012 in British Columbia, will now be discussed. While a Grade 7 student, Amanda held a video chat with an individual whom she did not know. The stranger convinced Amanda to show her breast area and then used a photo to

blackmail Amanda. Moreover, the stranger shared the photo online as a Facebook profile picture. The individual would follow Amanda online as a Facebook friend. Amanda posted a video, "My Story: Struggling, Bullying, and Suicide," where she used flashcards to describe her cyberbullying experience. Amanda hanged herself in her home a month later.

Another case of cyberbullying in 2016 that occurred in Texas resulted in the death of an adolescent named David Molak. After he received insulting text messages from a group of peers, David hung himself in the backyard of his parents' home. In response to this fatal incident, a cyberbullying law, Texas Senate Bill 179, was mandated in 2017 in David's honor to deter future cyberbullying incidents. The law requires school personnel to notify the parents or guardians of victims within three business days after the bullying occurrence.

Similar to the cases just described, students who are rejected by their peers are experiencing suicidal ideation at an alarming rate. Additional mental health concerns that arise from cyberbullying incidents may occur because of a social need of students to feel connected to their peers (Bazelon, 2014). Also, students may suffer from feelings of loneliness, anger management issues, and sleep disorders (Accordino & Accordino, 2011). Kwan et al. (2020) reported findings from a map of 19 systematic reviews regarding additional negative factors of cyberbullying on the physical and mental health of children. According to Kwan et al. (2020), 74% of reviews were related to the growth of cyberbullying concerns and depression, anxiety, self-harm, stress, suicidality, aggression/hostility, substance misuse/abuse, life satisfaction, and peer problems associated between children mental health and cyberbullying. Further, Kwan et al.

(2020) suggested cyberbullying may increase as the accessibility, availability, and functionality of digital devices with internet services continue to develop. Although researchers have addressed the issue of cyberbullying behaviors at the high school level (Sari & Camadan, 2016), limited published research studies could be located at middle school (You & Lim, 2016) and elementary school levels (DePaolis & Williford, 2015; Olenik-Shemesh & Heiman, 2014).

Review of the Literature on Cyberbullying and Factors that Impede Discipline Efforts for Cyberbullying

Hinduja and Patchin (2015) defined cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and electronic devices" (p. 11). In 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics noted results from the National Crime Victimization Survey administered to almost 25 million students between the ages of 12 and 18 during the 2012-2013 school year. In that survey, 6.9% of students reported that they had been victims of cyberbullying (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In 2019, the National Center for Education Statistics reported data from the 2010 and 2016 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) from approximately 3,000 public schools where principals stated daily/weekly cyberbullying cases increased from 7.9% in 2010 to 12% in 2016. This change in just six school years is reflective of a 150% increase in daily/weekly cyberbullying. Monthly cyberbullying incidents reported by principals increased from 9.4% in 2010 to 14.9% in 2016. Occasional cyberbullying incidents reported by principals increased from 45% in 2010 to 54% in 2016. The most substantial difference from the 2010 and 2016 SSOCS was the rate of cyberbullying incidents that were never reported by principals decreased from 37.7% in 2010 to 19.1% in 2016.

Prevalence rates were also examined by Moore, Huebner, and Hills (2012) who administered an electronic bullying survey to 855 Grade 7 and Grade 8 students. In regard to cyberbullying incidents, 14% of students stated they participated in cyberbullying, and 20% stated they had been cyberbullied. Of the students who were cybervictims, 3% stated they had been victims of electronic bullying at least several times a week. Student gender had a substantial relationship to electronic bullying. Girls were more likely to participate in electronic bullying than were boys. Moreover, girls and students of color were more likely to be victims of electronic bullying than were boys.

In a study on cyberbullying prevalence, Popović-Ćitić, Djurić, and Cvetković (2011) investigated the rate of cyberbullying incidents that occurred among 387 middle school students between the ages of 11-15 from five different schools in Belgrade. Students completed a survey to determine the frequency of cybervictimization by submitting demographic data, frequency of cell phone and computer usage, and experiences with cyberbullying (e.g., denigration, harassment, and outing). Of the sample, 20% of students reported they had been victims of cyberbullying and 10% of students indicated that they had been cyberbullying perpetrators.

Because of the ability of cyberbullying perpetrators to cause harm to their victims both in and out of school settings, principals and teachers face a myriad of challenges in their efforts to decrease the prevalence of cyberbullying incidents (Tomczyk & Wloch, 2019). According to Tomczyk and Wloch (2019), cyberbullying prevention barriers encountered by teachers include student hesitation to share cyberbullying experiences due to age differences, parents neglecting to assist with cyberbullying interventions when they occur at home, and teachers lacking knowledge regarding new digital information

and technology. To assist teachers with interventions, Tomczyk and Wloch (2019) recommended online cyberbully safety programs be implemented at school campuses.

Similar to Tomczyk and Wloch (2019), Hinduja and Patchin (2015) agreed school administrators and teachers should ensure safety prevention efforts are implemented at school campuses where cyberbullying might interrupt student learning. Recommended was that school administrators and teachers have universal definitions for intimidation, bullying, and harassment. Remedial actions and a series of consequences should be administered to cyberbully perpetrators. Detailed procedures regarding cyberbullying reporting and investigations must be clearly understood by students and school personnel (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015).

In regard to efforts to address cyberbullying, Cunningham et al. (2016) explored different perspectives concerning the effects of antibullying programs from 103 teachers who taught students in Kindergarten through Grade 8 in Canadian public and Catholic schools. Results were that schoolteachers believed they were not equipped to address off-campus cyberbullying incidents (Cunningham et al., 2016). Time restraints initiated by curriculum requirements prevented teachers from using cyberbullying prevention strategies, trainings, and prompt responses in a timely manner. Teachers also believed principals assigned inappropriate consequences to cyberbully perpetrators (Cunningham et al., 2016). Additional barriers included lack of support from campus principals and uncooperative parents, both of which limit the effects of cyberbullying interventions.

Because uncooperative parents may be linked to the different cyberbully roles of adolescents, Buelga, Martínez-Ferrer, and Cava (2017) addressed the limited literature available regarding family factors as related to cyberbullying prevention and intervention.

Failed mediating strategies by parents may hinder efforts to decrease the prevalence of cyberbullying (Bartolo, Palermiti, Servidio, Musso, & Costabile, 2019). Cyberbully communication efforts must be grounded in parent support and good relationships within the family structure to ensure that young children may increase the frequency of communication with their parents regarding cyberbullying victimization (Özdemir, 2014). Although parents and schoolteachers are important components to cyberbullying prevention and intervention, the entire school community should participate in the development of an effective cyberbullying policy (Corcoran & McGuckin, 2014).

In 2017, cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts in a New Jersey school district resulted in a lawsuit by the parents of Mallory Grossman after the 12-year old took her life (Zaremba, 2019). Mallory was in Grade 6 when she received harassing text messages via Snapchat and Instagram from classmates over a period of several months. A group of four girls consistently told Mallory that she did not have any friends and that she was a loser. The aggravation negatively affected Mallory who did not want to attend school anymore and began to have headaches and stomach aches. Although Mallory's parents spoke with teachers, the assistant principal, and counselors regarding the distressing texts, the parents alleged the school did not file a Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Report as required by the New Jersey Department of Education. In addition to the failure of the school to respond to cyberbullying incidents, Mallory's parents believed the cyberbully perpetrator parents lack of interest to assist their children with mediation during the investigation contributed to Mallory's suicide. Mallory's Law, passed by the Senate, requires parents of cyberbully perpetrators to be involved in

interventions if the harassment reaches a certain severity level. If parents disregard the intervention process, they could face civil liabilities.

Young, Tully, and Ramirez (2017) noted a lack of parental support because of a reluctance to accept their child's wrongdoing. The dissatisfaction that parents have with the results of administrative discipline policies or interventions also influenced parent failure to participate in cyberbullying interventions. Parental awareness efforts must be communicated regularly by school personnel because bullying behaviors continue to affect students after their school day.

Review of the Literature on Cyberbullying and Other Forms of Harassment by School Level

Cyberbullying has been defined as any behaviors performed using electronic or digital media by individuals or a group of individuals who repeatedly communicate aggressive or hostile messages intended to harm or cause the discomfort of others and the identity of the cyberbully may not be known (Camerini, Marciano, Carrara, & Schulz, 2020). Though researchers (Kavuk-Kalendar & Keser, 2018; Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014; Slonje, Smith, & Frisen, 2013) have examined cyberbullying incidents at the secondary level, limited research investigations are available for the elementary grade level (Giménez-Gualdo, Arnaiz-Sánchez, Cerezo-Ramírez, & Prodócimo, 2018). Educators must examine the frequency of harassment that may proceed cybervictimization because of different forms of cyberbullying that have increased from digital technology use (Hornor, 2018).

Digital technology and social media among boys and girls have brought concerns regarding student mental health (Kowalski et al., 2019). In an analysis of cyberbullying

incidents, Depaolis and Williford (2015) analyzed prevalence rate data for cybervictimization. They established rates between 14% and 22% for elementary school boys and girls. In an earlier study, Safaria (2016) investigated the prevalence of cybervictimization due to student internet usage increasing from 35% to 45% in 2010. Participants were102 Grade 7 Indonesian students, primarily 12- and 13-year-old boys, who completed a questionnaire regarding the frequency of cyberbullying behaviors. Of this sample of students, only 14.3% of students indicated that they had not been a victim of cyberbullying, 25.5% of students experienced cyberbullying occasionally, 20.6% of students experienced cyberbullying sometimes, 27.5% of students experienced cyberbullying often, and 12.7% of students experienced cyberbullying almost every day. The majority, 80%, of students stated they experienced cyberbullying from occasionally to almost every day. Also, Safaria (2016) noted the presence of a positive relationship between participant psychological distress and cybervictimization. Some boys and girls may feel anxious, sad, or fearful because of incidents that result from cyberbullying may cause negative effects on the psychological health of students.

Cybervictims suffer mental health issues due to cyberbullying. Beran et al. (2015) surveyed 26,078 boys and girls in Grades 6 through 10 from 436 schools in Canada regarding cybervictimization. Behaviors associated with cyberbullying incidents included suicidal ideation, aggression, and depression. Similar to the González-Calatayud (2018) study, girls were 6% more likely to be cybervictims than boys (Beran et al., 2015). Children who have experienced one or more kinds of harassment related to cyberbullying are more likely to have suicidal ideations (Sharma, Kishore, Sharma, & Duggal, 2017).

Furthermore, Fahy et al. (2016) examined the relationship between mental health issues and cyberbullying. In a study in London, Fahy et al. (2016) surveyed 2,480 teenagers at 25 schools to determine whether a relationship was present between cyberbullying and symptoms of social anxiety or depression that might affect student mental well-being. The authors noted cyberbullying effects on mental health constituted a public health concern, 42.2% of participants stated they had been involved with cyberbullying in the past 12 months, 20% of the participants reported they had been cyberbullied, 24.8% of participants reported they were depressed because of cyberbullying incidents, and 28.5% reported they were experiencing social anxiety symptoms. Females were more likely to experience depression and social anxiety (Fahy et al., 2016).

Student mental health may lead to additional risk factors. In a yearlong longitudinal study, Cappadocia, Craig, and Pepler (2013) addressed prevalence and risk factors associated with cyberbullying and cybervictimization. Participants were 1,972 high school students in Canada who completed surveys regarding the frequency of cyberbullying or cybervictimization over the last two months. Cybervictimization was reported by 13.5% of participants and cyberbullying was reported by 11.6% of participants. Boys and girls who consumed alcohol were two times more likely to be engaged in cyberbullying incidents (Cappadocia et al., 2013). Higher levels of depression were also present for Grade 9 students because of the transitional year transitional year. Girls had been victims of cyberbullying more than boys. Similarities between cyberbullying and social forms of traditional bullying (e.g., gossiping and spreading rumors) were also present (Cappadocia et al., 2013).

Cyberbully perpetrators use gossip and rumors to damage student relationships and the reputations of cybervictims (Fahy et al., 2016). In another study, Mcloughlin et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between student mental health and social connectedness. Online surveys were completed by 229 students between the ages of 12 and 17 in Australia. Three areas were measured in the survey: (a) cyberbullying, (b) social connectedness, and (c) negative emotional states. Of this sample, 27% of participants had been a victim of cyberbullying. Girls were less socially connected to their peers than boys and girls were more depressed, stressed, and anxious than boys.

An example of how depression may cause girls to commit more suicide acts than boys, the Gabriella Green case will now be discussed. Gabriella was a victim of a fatal incident in 2018 that may have been avoided if a peer did not attempt to ruin her reputation by causing her emotional stress. Gabriella was a Florida pre-teen who hanged herself after being cyberbullied by her peers. She was 12-years old when she committed suicide because of rumors shared on social media accounts by a middle school student about Gabriella having a sexually transmitted disease. After Gabriella reached out to another peer to advise she was going to hang herself, a different peer told Gabriella that she should attempt suicide. Tanya Green, Gabriella's mother, reported that she blamed the school system and the parents of the students who were involved with the cyberbullying incident because of the lack of concern for the safety of her daughter (The Associated Press, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Although the definition of cyberbullying and prevalence rates may differ across studies, researchers (DePaolis & Williford, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010) agreed that

cyberbullying is a pervasive problem that affects the daily lives of adolescents. Prevalence rates regarding cyberbullying incidents range from 10% to 40% (Kowalski, Limber, & McCord, 2019). According to Safaria (2016), 80% of students in Grade 7 reported being a victim of cyberbullying almost every day. Cyberbullying involving online harassment has increased from 20% in 2010 to a little over 35% in 2019 (Patchin & Hinduja, 2019).

To date, many researchers (Kavuk-Kalender & Keser, 2018; Slonje, Smith, & Frisen, 2013; Safaria, 2016) have analyzed cyberbullying incidents that affect middle and high school students. What is needed is that researchers investigate the frequency of cyberbullying at the elementary school level to provide accurate data regarding the cyberbullying phenomenon. Former-President Barak Obama (2011) raised awareness of cyberbullying incidents and gained attention from federal authorities. Federal civil rights laws, enforced by the United States Department of Education and the United States Department of Justice, were mandated to force schools to address discriminatory harassment (StopBullying.Gov, 2020). Student misconduct that is: (a) based on students' color, race, sex, national origin, religion, or disability; (b) persistent, severe, or pervasive; (c) has the potential to create an environment that is hostile at school, and (d) interferes with students' ability to benefit from activities, services, or opportunities that are offered by a school must be addressed (StopBullying.Gov, 2020). School personnel must engage in efforts to improve school climate and decrease the rate of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013).

Kwan et al. (2020) examined the phenomenon of cyberbullying due to the mental and psychosocial consequences that students may have as a result of being cyberbullied.

Estimates are that about 20% to 40% of students have experienced cyberbullying at least once in their lifetime. Such instances of cyberbullying may negatively affect student mental and psychological health (Tokunaga, 2010). Consequences may include suicidal ideation, anxiety, depression, and withdrawal as a result of cyberbullying incidents (Kwan et al., 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to determine the degree to which cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts are provided at different school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high). In the first journal article, the extent to which the frequencies of cyberbullying teacher trainings differ by school level was examined. In the second study, the extent to which factors that impede discipline efforts differ by school level was ascertained. In the third investigation, the degree to which relationships differ between the differences in other forms of harassment and cyberbullying by school level was examined. In each of the three studies, two years of national archival data were examined to ascertain the degree to which consistency was present in cyberbullying prevention and intervention by school level.

Significance of the Study

Due to the level of anxiety students are experiencing and because of the serious consequences involved in cyberbullying, it is important for school administrators, teachers, and parents to address cyberbullying. Suicidal ideation has increased because of harmful content that is shared between and among students via digital media. Cybervictims score higher in depression and anxiety measures and score lower on self-esteem measures (Kowalski et al., 2014). Although numerous research studies exist

regarding cyberbullying incidents that occur nationwide at the high school level, limited research studies are available regarding cyberbullying at the elementary and middle school levels (DePaolis & Williford, 2015; Donegan, 2012).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to assist the reader in understanding the context of this journal-ready dissertation.

Bullying

Bullying is defined as the unwanted aggressive behavior or behaviors by an individual youth or group of youths who are not siblings that involve a perceived or an observed imbalance of power that is repeated multiple times (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018).

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is defined as a repeated and willful harm that is inflicted using cell phones, computers, and/or other electronic devices (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018).

Cybervictim

A cybervictim is defined as an individual who has been bullied by another individual or group of individuals using online technology (Rodríguez-Enríquez et al., 2019).

Elementary School

An elementary school was defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade Pre-K through Grade 3 (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018).

Gender Identity

An individual's sense of their own gender, which may or may not match the individual's assigned sex at birth (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018).

Harassment

Harassment is defined as unwanted physical or verbal behavior from an individual or group of individuals (Faucher, Cassidy, & Jackson, 2015).

High School

A high school was defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade 9 through Grade 12 and a highest grade level that is within Grade 10 and through Grade 12 (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018).

Mental Health

Mental health is defined as mental disorders or health disorders that were diagnosable and characterized by mood, behavior, or altered thinking that is associated with impaired functioning and/or distress (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018).

Middle School

A middle school was defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade 4 through Grade 9 (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018).

School Survey on Crime and Safety

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) is the primary source of crime and safety data that were collected at different school-levels for the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. The document contains estimated data regarding school

discipline, crime, disorder, policies, and programs cross-sectional surveys from public elementary and secondary schools.

Delimitations

In this journal-ready dissertation, the three studies were delimited to public schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. These three school designations were selected because they are the most common types of school levels. Specifically examined in this journal-ready dissertation was the degree to which differences might be present in cyberbullying efforts as a function of traditionally configured school levels. Data were delimited to public schools in the United States. This delimitation included only safety data for Pre-K-12 schools. Specifically examined in this journal-ready dissertation were the degree to which differences might be present in cyberbullying efforts as a function of school level. Finally, the data will consist of the two most recent school years (i.e., 2015-2016 and 2017-2018) that the School Survey on Crime and Safety were conducted (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018).

Limitations

In this journal-ready dissertation, the relationship of school level and cyberbullying efforts were addressed. As a result, key limitations were present for the study. First, only quantitative data were analyzed herein. Accordingly, other variables cannot be eliminated as factors that contribute to cyberbullying incidents. Another limitation was with the use of a causal-comparative research design that is common when archival data are analyzed. As such, cause and effect relationships cannot be determined. Other variables other than school level may be contributing to any differences obtained in cyberbullying efforts. A third limitation includes variables of teaching training efforts

and harassment that are reported using the different perspectives from only public-school principals at each school level. Although data were collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, the possibility exists that inaccurate reporting may have occurred.

Assumptions

The assumption that was made in this journal-ready dissertation is that crime and safety data acquired from the SSOCS were accurately reported. The assumption was made that school principals accurately reported data that were collected by the National Center for Education Statistics for teacher trainings and discipline policies, factors that impede discipline efforts, and harassment. Any errors in such reporting could result in inaccurate data and contradictory findings.

Procedures

Following the approval of this journal-ready dissertation from the doctoral dissertation committee, an application was submitted to the Sam Houston State University Institutional Review Board to perform the study. Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board, data from the SSOCS were downloaded and analyzed. The data were collected and analyzed from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

Organization of the Study

For this journal-ready dissertation, three research studies were conducted. In the first study, data were analyzed to determine the extent to which differences might be present in the frequency of teacher training and cyberbullying by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school). For the second study, data were analyzed to ascertain the degree to which differences might exist in factors that impede discipline efforts by school level. In the third article, survey data were examined to determine the

degree to which differences might be present in how often harassment, other than cyberbullying bullying, occurs by school level.

This journal-ready dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Chapter I includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and outline of the journal-ready dissertation. Chapter II is the first empirical research investigation about the degree to which differences might be present in teacher trainings and discipline policies related to the frequency of cyberbullying incidents. Chapter III includes the second empirical research study and was about factors or barriers that impede discipline efforts to decrease cyberbullying incidents. The third empirical research investigation was in Chapter IV and was about the extent to which differences might exist in the rates of other harassment compared to cyberbullying that may affect student mental health. Each of the three articles will have its own method and data analysis sections. Finally, a discussion of the research results for all three studies, recommendations for future research regarding school levels, and implications for policy and practice was included in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

DIFFERENCES IN TEACHER TRAININGS AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES BY SCHOOL LEVEL: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

Abstract

The degree to which cyberbullying teacher trainings differed by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) was addressed in this study using data from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. Inferential statistical procedures revealed the presence of statistically significant differences in discipline efforts and teacher trainings for cyberbullying, student violence, recognition of early warning signs for students who are likely to exhibit violent behaviors, and recognition of student social, physical, and verbal bullying behaviors by school level. Elementary schools had statistically significantly higher percentages of schools that did not offer teacher trainings for cyberbullying and for intervention and referral strategies. Implications for policy and for practice were discussed, as well as recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Bullying; Cyberbullying; Cybervictims; Elementary schools; High schools; Intervention; Middle schools; Policies; Referral; School Survey on Crime and Safety; Teachers; Teacher training

DIFFERENCES IN TEACHER TRAININGS AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES BY SCHOOL LEVEL: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

Cyberbullying, defined as a repeated and willful harm inflicted by cell phones, computers, and/or other electronic devices (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018), is a rapidly increasing phenomenon (Bauman, 2010). Prevalence rates regarding cyberbullying incidents range from 10% to 40% (Kowalski, Limber, & McCord, 2019). The National Crime Victimization Survey documented an increase in almost 5% of cyberbullying rates that were reported by students between 2009 and 2011 (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2014). Although the definition of cyberbullying and prevalence rates may differ across studies, researchers (Bauman, 2013; DePaolis & Williford, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010) agreed that cyberbullying is a pervasive problem that affects the daily lives of adolescents.

Due to a dearth of research studies at the elementary school level, Olenik-Shemesh and Heiman (2014) investigated the prevalence of cyberbullying at elementary schools in Israel. They focused on the relationships between cybervictimization and student self-efficacy, social support, well-being, and sense of loneliness. A questionnaire was completed by 398 students in Grades 5 and 6 who were between the ages of 10 and 12. The results of the survey indicated that approximately 80% of students used the Internet daily. Substantial prevalence, 20.4%, of cybervictimization among elementary students was reported. Almost, half, 45.7%, of students stated they knew someone who participated in cyberbully behaviors, 5% stated they had cyberbullied another peer, and 45.6% reported they had witnessed another peer who was cyberbullied.

In a study in Israel, 328 teachers who taught at elementary, middle, and high schools and who were between the ages of 22 and 63, agreed that cyberbullying was a problem in their schools (Eden, Heiman, & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). The authors examined the perceptions, concerns, and beliefs of teachers. Teachers completed a Likert-format questionnaire, responding to questions about policymaking, enhancing awareness of school teams, and coping strategies for parents. Of this sample, 72% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that cyberbullying was a problem in their schools, 38% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed they were confident in the identification of cyberbullying incidents, 86% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed schools should have a strict policy to address cyberbullying, and 68% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed they wanted to learn more about cyberbullying. Teacher education level, age, and gender affected their level of concern for cyberbullying incidents. Females were more concerned than were males to address cyberbullying incidents. Teachers who taught students with special needs were more concerned with the prevention and policies for cyberbullying (Eden et al., 2013).

Similar to Olenik-Shemesh and Heiman (2014), DePaolis and Williford (2015) examined the nature and prevalence of cyberbullying incidents. In their study, 660 Grade 3 through Grade 5 students from six different schools completed an online survey about the prevalence of cyberbullying in their elementary school setting. Almost all students reported they used internet services at home. Results of this online survey were that 11% of the cyberbullying victims were involved in incidents weekly via online games, 32% of the cyberbullying victims were bullied by text messages, and 21% of the cyberbullying victims were bullied on social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram. The

perpetrator of the cyberbullying was known by 38% of the cyberbullying victims and almost 50% of the victims refused to tell anyone about the cyberbullying incident (DePaolis & Williford, 2015).

Regarding the frequency of cyberbullying incidents from the DePaolis and Williford (2015) study, victimization was reported by 14% of students in Grade 3, 15% of students in Grade 4, and 22% of students in Grade 5. Cyberbullying behaviors increased more than 5% between Grades 3 and 5. All student groups combined included 17% of students who were victims of cyberbullying at least once during the school year (DePaolis & Williford, 2015).

In an investigation in Indonesia, Safaria (2016) examined the occurrences of cyberbullying through surveying 102 Grade 7 students. Addressed in this investigation were the coping strategies of adolescents, psychological effects of cyberbullying, and the relationship between student online activity and the frequency of cyberbullying incidents. Safaria (2016) established that approximately 80% of the surveyed students were victims of cyberbullying occasionally to almost every day. Of the students surveyed, over 10% of them reported being a victim almost every day and over 25% indicated they were often a victim. Only 14% of the students responded that they were never a victim of cybervictimization. Furthermore, Safaria (2016) determined that student gender was not a statistically significant factor in the frequency of cyberbullying victimization, although boys were documented to participate in statistically significant more cyberbullying acts than girls.

Sari and Camadan (2016) investigated cybervictimization at the high school level with 286 students in Turkey to determine cyberbullying violence tendency between

cyberbully perpetrators and cybervictims. The authors documented the presence of a statistically significant relationship between cyberbully perpetrators and violent behaviors using an inventory for cyberbullying behaviors and a violence tendency scale. Cyberbullying was defined as a "deliberate, repetitive, and permanent behavior pattern against defenseless victim mostly by an unknown group or individual through electronic environments such as text messages, picture/video clips, phone calls, emails, chat-rooms, instant messages, and websites" (Sari & Camadan, 2016, pp. 317-318). Sari and Camadan (2016) explained 12% of student violence tendency was related to cyberbullying behaviors for perpetrators and 6% of student violence tendency was related to cybervictims.

Similarly, You and Lim (2016) examined cyberbully perpetration among a sample of 3,449 randomly selected middle school students in Korea who participated in a 6-year longitudinal study. Presented in the data were predictors, such as student background variables (e.g., mother's and father's academic ability, family income, computer usage, mobile phone usage, gender, nontraditional family, and achievement), student experience with bullying, and psychological factors (e.g., self-esteem, aggression, lack of self-control, sociality, and emotional regulation) that may affect the prevalence cyberbullying behaviors. You and Lim (2016) determined that students who had fathers with limited academic ability and who experienced offline bullying and victimization were at a higher risk of engaging in cyberbullying. Also established in the study was that students who had prolonged exposure to the Internet, who had a high aggression level, and who lacked self-control were more likely to participate in cyberbully behaviors.

Extended exposure to internet sources may increase the use of social networking applications that may be used in cyberbullying incidents (Schneider, O'Donnel, & Smith, 2015). Schneider et al. (2015) compared cyberbullying victimization rates from survey items (i.e., cell phones, the Internet, or other electronic devices were used to bully, threaten, or tease) answered by 16,000 students in Grade 9 through Grade 12 who attended 17 Boston high schools between 2006 through 2012. Results were an increase in cyberbullying victimization rates at all grade levels. Cyberbullying behaviors increased from 15% to 21% during the 6-year period. Cyberbullying incidents increased more with girls (17% to 27%) than with boys (12% to 15%). One-third of the sample size told an adult when a cyberbullying incident occurred. For Grade 9 students, cyberbullying victimization increased from 16% in 2006 to 23% in 2012, Grade 10 cyberbullying increased from 16% in 2006 to 22% in 2012, Grade 11 cyberbullying increased from 14% in 2006 to 20% in 2012, and Grade 12 cyberbullying increased from 12% in 2006 to 19% in 2012. Cyberbullying victimization rates were reported by more Grade 9 and Grade 10 students than Grade 11 and Grade 12 students.

In a later investigation, Patchin and Hinduja (2019) surveyed 5,700 students between the ages of 12 and 17. Patchin and Hinduja (2019) defined cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (p. 2). Indicators that were used in the 2019 study regarding cyberbullying victimization included: mean or hurtful posts online about a student, mean or hurtful pictures online about a student, mean or hurtful videos online about a student, mean or hurtful web pages created regarding a student, online rumors regarding a student, online threats toward a student, and someone pretended to be student online to be mean

or hurtful towards another student. In this 2016 survey, over 25% of students stated they had been a victim of cyberbullying 30 days prior to completing the survey (Patchin & Hinduja, 2019). The most frequent cyberbullying incidents reported were mean or hurtful comments online (23%) and online rumors (20%).

In a follow-up survey using the same indicators, Patchin and Hinduja (2019) collected data from 4,972 students between the ages of 12 and 17. In the 30-day period prior to completing the survey, 30% of the students had been a victim of cyberbullying. The most frequent cyberbullying incidents reported were mean or hurtful comments online (25%) and online rumors (22%). Girls were 5% more likely than boys to be a victim of cyberbullying via online rumors.

Although students are aware of the increased rate of cybervictimization at school campuses that are prevalent via rumors and other harassment social media sites, teachers rarely intervene or detect cyberbullying because incidents generally occur off campus followed by additional threats that may occur on campus. Most teachers do not believe they have received specific intervention training to address cyberbullying incidents as they deal with the aftermath that is brought to campus the next school day (Giménez-Gualdo et al., 2018; Kavuk, Bulu, & Keser, 2016). Schoolteachers' perceptions regarding cyberbullying prevention include several challenges: (a) digital integration in the classroom because adolescents primarily use their digital devices to socialize with their peers, (b) implementing effective discipline policies to decrease truancy and poor academic performance that may result from cyberbullying incidents, and (c) a gap that exists between teacher and student technological skills as students misuse technology to negatively affect school climate (Tomczyk & Wloch, 2019).

Stauffer, Heath, Coyne, and Ferrin (2012) also investigated teacher perceptions that included cyberbullying incidents that they believed did not have long term effects on cybervictims. The authors surveyed 66 teachers at an urban high school in the United States that did not have a cyberbullying prevention program or discipline policy. School teachers completed a questionnaire with three open-ended questions and a survey using a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire included the following: (a) When addressing cyberbullying, which intervening strategies are teachers most likely to use?; (b) What are teachers general attitudes regarding the impact of cyberbullying on students?; and (c) Based on teachers perceptions, how effective are specific prevention strategies in decreasing cyberbullying? Results were that 18% of schoolteachers believed cyberbullying toughened kids up and 42% of teachers believed a prevention program should probably or definitely be implemented. Findings also included teachers were more likely to use administrative reporting strategies for interventions, teachers believed cyberbullying had long-lasting effects on victims, and teachers believed that parental involvement would be the most effective prevention strategy to decrease cyberbullying incidents. In addition to parental influence, teachers also believed discipline policies should include additional strategies: (a) warning students about consequences of cyberbullying, (b) increasing parent involvement, and (c) increasing cyberbullying consequences to deter cyberbullying perpetrators (Stauffer et al., 2012).

In a study conducted by Styron, Bonner, Styron, Bridgeforth, and Martin (2016), preservice teachers in university programs were not prepared for the prevalence level of cyberbullying incidents at their campuses. The authors investigated the preparation of 120 principal and teacher candidates and cyberbullying prevention at a 4-year university

in the southeastern region of the United States. Candidates completed a questionnaire to provide their insight about seven types of cyberbullying incidents: (a) flaming, (b) online harassment, (c) cyberstalking, (d) denigration, (e) impersonating, (f) trickery, and (g) exclusion. Of this sample, 99.2% of candidates were familiar with online harassment, 89.2% were familiar with denigration, 94% were familiar with impersonating, 92.5% were familiar with cyberstalking, 83.2% were familiar with trickery, 84.2% were familiar with flaming, and 73.1% were familiar with exclusion (Styron et al., 2016).

Lack of teacher preparation described by Styron et al. (2016) was also addressed by Cassidy, Brown, and Jackson (2012). In a qualitative analysis, the authors examined the experiences of 17 educators, including school administrators, technology teachers, social studies teachers, youth workers, school counselors, and two principals and two vice-principals from two large secondary schools in Canada. Cassidy et al. (2012) used the following research questions to address teachers perspectives and trainings: (a) Do educators consider cyberbullying a problem at your school and how familiar are they with the extent and impact among their students?; (b) What policies and practices are in place at schools to counter or prevent cyberbullying?; and (c) What solutions do educators have for encouraging a kinder online environment? Of this sample, 59% of the participants were concerned or extremely concerned regarding cyberbullying incidents at their campus and 82% of the participants noted cyberbullying prevention should be a priority for all schools (Cassidy et al., 2012). Common themes from the study included adults modeling appropriate online behavior at home and at school and providing an opportunity to establish trusting relationships that will improve the dialogue between teachers, parents, and students as they seek effective solutions (Cassidy et al., 2012).

Schools should use proactive policies or programs to encourage students to be kinder and more respectful online. Policies and programs must support cyberbullying prevention efforts.

In addition to themes that were noted by Cassidy et al. (2012), Macaulay, Betts, Stiller, and Kellezi (2018) also identified themes related to teacher perceptions and responses toward cyberbullying. In their study, they noted the presence of five themes: (a) school strategies and commitment to manage cyberbullying, (b) characteristics of cyberbullying and student involvement, (c) cyberbullying training and guidance for teachers, (d) teacher confidence and concerns regarding cyberbullying, and (e) the extent and impact of cyberbullying prevalence and consequences. Prior to the development of anti-cyberbullying programs, teachers must be aware of the consequences and prevalence associated with cyberbullying to appropriately address inappropriate behaviors (Macaulay et al., 2018).

Researchers (e.g., Bauman & Yoon, 2014) have investigated anti-cyberbullying programs that were developed without reference to a theoretical basis. Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Theory of bullying and victimization includes peer groups that are generally used during cyberbullying incidents that occur at schools or in neighborhoods. Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports may influence a school climate to decrease bullying behaviors. Teacher clarity and understanding regarding intervention and prevention of cyberbullying are necessary for an appropriate response that may deter cyberbully perpetrators who may influence their peers to harm themselves (Bauman & Yoon, 2014).

As an example of how detrimental cyberbullying incidents can be, the Amanda Todd Case in 2012 in British Columbia, will now be discussed (Dean, 2012). While a Grade 7 student, Amanda held a video chat with an individual whom she did not know. The stranger convinced Amanda to show her breast area and then used a photo to blackmail Amanda. Moreover, the stranger shared the photo online as a Facebook profile picture. The individual would follow Amanda online as a Facebook friend. Amanda posted a video, "My Story: Struggling, Bullying, and Suicide," where she used flashcards to describe her cyberbullying experience. Amanda hanged herself a month later in her home.

Another case of cyberbullying in 2016 occurred in Texas and resulted in the death of an adolescent named David Molak. After he received insulting text messages from a group of peers, David hung himself in the backyard of his parents' home. As a response to this incident, a cyberbullying law, Texas Senate Bill 179, was enacted in 2017 in David's honor to deter future cyberbullying incidents. The law requires school personnel to notify the parents or guardian of a victim within three business days after the incident occurred.

Similar to these cases just described, students who are rejected by their peers in a negative manner may experience suicidal ideation and other mental health concerns as a result of the increase in cyberbullying (Bazelon, 2014). Students may also suffer from feelings of loneliness, anger management issues, and sleep disorders (Accordino & Accordino, 2011). Kwan et al. (2020) reported findings from a map of 19 systematic reviews regarding additional negative factors of cyberbullying on the physical and mental health of children. Kwan et al. (2020) determined that 74% of the reviews were related to

the growth of cyberbullying concerns and depression, anxiety, self-harm, stress, suicidality, aggression/hostility, substance misuse/abuse, life satisfaction, and peer problems associated between children's mental health and cyberbullying. Kwan et al. (2020) suggested cyberbullying may increase as the accessibility, availability, and functionality of digital devices with internet services continue to develop. Although researchers (e.g., Sari & Camadan, 2016) have addressed the issue of cyberbullying behaviors at the high school level, limited published research studies could be located on cyberbullying at the middle school (You & Lim, 2016) and elementary school levels (DePaolis & Williford, 2015; Olenik-Shemesh & Heiman, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Cyberbullying is a serious problem (Kowalski, Limber, & McCord, 2019). Few authors have investigated cyberbullying incidents at the elementary school level (DePaolis & Williford, 2015; Olenik-Shemesh & Heiman, 2014), at the middle school level (You & Lim, 2016), and at the high school level (Sari & Camadan, 2016). Adequate prevention and intervention cyberbullying trainings must be provided to students before they reach adolescence to deter incidents that may be harmful or deadly.

Researchers (Kavuk-Kalender & Keser, 2018; Slonje, Smith, & Frisen, 2013) have analyzed cyberbullying incidents that affect middle and high school students. Federal civil rights laws, enforced by the United States Department of Education and the United States Department of Justice, have issued mandates that schools must address discriminatory harassment. Student conduct that is: (a) based on students' color, race, sex, national origin, religion, or disability; (b) persistent, severe, or pervasive; (c) has the potential to create an environment that is hostile at school and interferes with students'

ability to benefit from activities, services, or opportunities that are offered by a school must be addressed (StopBullying.Gov, 2020). Schools at all grade levels across the United States must develop and implement effective teacher trainings to establish a school climate to reduce cyberbullying incidents that impede student learning (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which differences were present in the frequencies of whether teacher trainings were offered for school-wide discipline policies related to cyberbullying by school level. The second purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which differences existed in whether teacher trainings were offered for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies by school level. The third purpose was to ascertain the degree to which differences were present in whether teacher trainings were offered to recognize early warning signs for students who are likely to exhibit violent behaviors by school level. Finally, the fourth purpose was to determine the extent to which differences existed in whether teacher trainings were offered to recognize student social, physical, and verbal bullying behaviors by school level.

Significance of the Study

Limited research studies have been published regarding efforts implemented by schools to address cyberbullying (Cunningham et al., 2015; Espelage, 2015). To date, no published articles in which researchers had examined the relationship between cyberbullying prevention efforts at different school levels using variables from the School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) were located. To address interventions that

may decrease the prevalence of the cyberbullying phenomenon, researchers should analyze the frequency of teacher trainings at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Olenik-Shemesh and Heiman (2014) discussed a positive relationship between student well-being and low levels of self-efficacy that may attribute to cybervictimization. Therefore, discussions of cyberbullying victimization and cyberbullying engagement among elementary school students are important to provide early interventions programs that may decrease the prevalence of cyberbully behaviors during adolescent years and beyond (Olenik-Shemesh & Heiman, 2014). Practitioners who may benefit from this study include educational leaders, classroom teachers, and district personnel.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this investigation: (a) What is the difference in the frequency of teacher trainings that were offered for school-wide discipline policies related to cyberbullying by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school)?; (b) What is the difference in teacher trainings that were offered for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies by school level?; (c) What is the difference in teacher trainings that were offered to recognize early warning signs for students who are likely to exhibit violent behaviors by school level?; (d) What are the differences in teacher trainings that were offered to recognize student social, physical, and verbal bullying behaviors by school level?; (e) What are the consistencies between cyberbullying teacher trainings for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years?; and (f) What are the consistencies between teacher trainings for intervention and

referral for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years? These research questions were repeated for two years of data: 2015-2016 and 2017-2018.

Method

Research Design

For this empirical investigation, a non-experimental, causal comparative research design was used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Dependent variables were responses to four questions regarding (a) differences in frequency of teacher trainings that were offered for cyberbullying, (b) differences in how often teacher trainings were offered for student violence, (c) differences in how often teacher trainings were offered to recognize early warning signs for students who are likely to exhibit violent behaviors, and (d) differences in teacher trainings that were offered to recognize student social, physical, and verbal bullying behaviors. The independent variable was school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high schools). Archival data from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 National School Safety Datasets were analyzed in this study.

Participants and Instrumentation

A sample composed of 2,092 elementary, middle, and high schools located in the United States was used in this study. The School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education with data administered by the U.S. Census Bureau, was used for this study. The School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) contains crime and safety data from U.S. public school principals and school administrators. Survey topics included: school practices and programs, school mental health services, number of incidents, parent and community involvement at school, limitations on crime prevention,

school security staff, staff training, frequency of crime and violence at school, disciplinary problems and actions, and school characteristics (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018). Researchers may use the data to examine the relationship between school characteristics and violent and seriously violent crimes in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Additionally, the School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) can be used to determine which schools use crime prevention policies, procedures, and strategies. The School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) has been conducted seven times: 1999-2000, 2003-2004, 2005-2006, 2007-2008, 2009-2010, 2015-2016, and 2017-2018. Definitions were added to the School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) that pertain to data contained in the survey.

According to the School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018), for the purpose of this study, elementary schools were defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade Pre-K through Grade3. Middle schools were defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade 4 through Grade 9 (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018). High schools were defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade 9 through Grade 12 and a highest grade level that is within Grade 10 and through Grade 12 (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018).

Archival data were collected from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 National School Safety Datasets and converted to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) data (Field, 2018). A codebook was used to recode the data from the following survey questions: (a) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school or school district provide any training in school-wide discipline policies related to

cyberbullying for teachers or teacher aides?; (b) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school or school district provide any training in school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies for students who may display mental health disorders for teachers or teacher aides?; (c) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school or school district provide any training in school-wide discipline policies related to recognizing early warning signs of students who are most likely to exhibit violent behavior for teachers or teacher aides?; and (d) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school or school district provide any training in school-wide discipline policies related to recognizing physical, verbal, or social bullying behaviors for teachers or teacher aides? Respondents completed the survey by answering the questions with either a Yes or a No.

Results

To determine the degree to which the differences were present in teacher trainings in school-wide discipline policies by school level for the 2015-2016 school year, Pearson chi-square procedures were conducted. The statistical procedure was viewed as the optimal statistical procedure to use because frequency data were present for school level and for the five dependent variables: (a) cyberbullying discipline policies, (b) school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies for students who may display mental health disorders, (c) training in school-wide discipline policies related to recognizing early warning signs of students who are most likely to exhibit violent behavior, and (d) training in school-wide discipline policies related to recognizing physical, verbal, or social bullying behaviors. Because these variables were categorical, chi-squares are the statistical procedure of choice (Slate & Rojas-LeBouef, 2011). In

addition, with the large sample sizes, the available sample size per cell was more than five. Therefore, the assumptions for using a Pearson chi-square procedure were met.

For the first research question for the 2015-2016 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 27.42$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .12 (Cohen, 1988). As revealed in Table 2.1, over one third of the elementary schools did not offer cyberbullying teacher trainings, compared to more than one fifth of the middle schools that did not offer such teacher trainings, and less than one third of high schools that did not offer cyberbullying teacher trainings. Concerning the 2017-2018 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 21.44$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .09 (Cohen, 1988). Over one third of the elementary schools did not offer cyberbullying teacher trainings, compared to more than one fifth of the middle schools that did not offer such teacher trainings, and less than one third of high schools that did not offer cyberbullying teacher trainings (See Figure 2.1).

Insert Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 about here

With respect to the second research question for the 2015-2016 school year regarding teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies, the result approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(2) = 5.08$, $p = .08$. As revealed in Table 2.2, a stair-step effect was observed in that elementary schools provided the fewest teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies. Middle schools

provided the second fewest teacher trainings. High schools offered the most teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies (See Figure 2.2). Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the result was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 4.38$, $p = .11$. Though not statistically significant, a stair-step effect was observed in that elementary schools provided the fewest teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies. Middle schools provided the second fewest teacher trainings. High schools offered the most teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies. Delineated in Table 2.2 are the descriptive statistics for these analyses.

Insert Table 2.2 and Figure 2.2 about here

Concerning the third research question for the 2015-2016 school year, school-wide discipline policies related to early warning signs of violent behavior, the result approached, but did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(2) = 5.40$, $p = .07$. As revealed in Table 2.3, more than one half of elementary and middle schools did not offer teacher trainings for early warning signs of violent behavior. Less than one half of high schools offered teacher trainings for early warning signs of violent behavior. Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 12.81$, $p = .002$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .07 (Cohen, 1988). One half of middle schools for the 2017-2018 school year did not offer teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to early warning signs of

violent behavior, compared to less than one half of elementary and high schools that did not offer such teacher trainings (See Figure 2.3).

Insert Table 2.3 and Figure 2.3 about here

Regarding the fourth research question for the 2015-2016 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 11.41$, $p = .003$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .07 (Cohen, 1988). In Figure 2.4, one fourth of elementary schools for the 2015-2016 school year did not offer teacher trainings for student bullying behaviors, compared to more than one fourth of the high schools that did not offer such teacher trainings, and less than one fourth of middle schools that did not offer teacher trainings for bullying behaviors. With respect to the 2017-2018 school year, the result approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(2) = 4.84$, $p = .09$. Elementary and high schools had the highest percentages that did not provide teacher trainings in this area. Middle schools offered the highest levels of teacher trainings for student bullying behaviors. Delineated in Table 2.4 are the descriptive statistics for these analyses.

Insert Table 2.4 and Figure 2.4 about here

Concerning the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded for cyberbullying teacher trainings by school level, $\chi^2(2) = 27.42$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .12 (Cohen, 1988). Elementary

schools provided the fewest cyberbullying teacher trainings. High schools provided the second fewest trainings in this area and middle schools provided the most trainings for cyberbullying (See Figure 2.1). Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 21.44$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .09 (Cohen, 1988). Elementary schools provided the fewest cyberbullying teacher trainings. High schools provided the second fewest trainings in this area and middle schools provided the most trainings for cyberbullying.

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year, concerning teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies, the result approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(2) = 5.08$, $p = .08$. Although not statistically significant, similar results were present for this survey question across all three school levels (See Figure 2.2). With regard to the 2017-2018 school year, the result was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 4.38$, $p = .11$. Though not statistically significant, similar results were present for this survey question across all three school levels. A consistent stair-step effect was observed in that elementary schools provided the fewest teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies. Table 2.2 contains the descriptive statistics for these analyses.

Discussion

Data regarding teacher trainings for discipline policies were obtained and analyzed from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety for two school years. Inferential statistical analyses revealed that cyberbullying teacher trainings were statistically significantly different by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) for

the 2015-2016 school year. Over one third of the elementary schools did not offer cyberbullying teacher trainings, compared to one fifth of the middle schools that did not offer such teacher trainings, and less than one third of high schools that did not offer cyberbullying teacher trainings. During the 2017-2018 school year, over one third of the elementary schools did not offer cyberbullying teacher trainings, compared to one fifth of the middle schools who did not offer such teacher trainings, and less than one third of high schools that did not offer cyberbullying teacher trainings.

Teacher trainings for bullying behaviors were also statistically significant for the 2015-2016 school year. One fourth of elementary schools did not offer teacher trainings for student bullying behaviors, compared to more than one fourth of the high schools that did not offer such teacher trainings, and less than one fourth of middle schools that did not offer teacher trainings for bullying behaviors. Teacher trainings for bullying behaviors; however, were not statistically significant for the 2017-2018 school year. Elementary and high schools had the highest percentages that did not provide teacher trainings in this area. Middle schools offered the highest levels of teacher trainings for student bullying behaviors.

Teacher trainings regarding school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies were not statistically significant for the 2015-2016 school year. A consistent stair-step effect was observed in that elementary schools provided the fewest teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies. Middle schools provided the second fewest teacher trainings and high schools offered the most teacher trainings for school-wide discipline. Although teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies during

the 2017-2018 school year were not statistically significantly different at the conventional level of statistical significance, a consistent stair-step effect was observed in that elementary schools provided the fewest teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies. Middle schools provided the second fewest teacher trainings and high schools offered the most teacher trainings for school-wide discipline.

With respect to trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to early warning signs of violent behavior, results were not statistically significant for the 2015-2016 school year. More than one half of elementary and middle schools did not offer teacher trainings for early warning signs of violent behavior. Less than one half of high schools offered teacher trainings for early warning signs of violent behavior. Teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to early warning signs of violent behavior were statistically significantly different for the 2017-2018 school year. One half of middle schools did not offer teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to early warning signs of violent behavior. Less than one half of elementary and high schools did not offer such teacher trainings.

In this investigation for two school years, elementary schools consistently offered fewer teacher trainings than did middle schools or high schools. Findings regarding the frequencies of teacher trainings for cyberbullying were consistent for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. Teacher trainings regarding school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies were also consistent throughout the study.

Connections with Existing Literature

Clearly established in this nationwide study were findings regarding a lack of teacher trainings for discipline policies that are provided at the elementary school level. DePaolis and Williford (2015) documented the prevalence of cyberbullying incidents at the elementary school level. Although trainings should be provided, results were consistent across the study regarding lack of efficient teacher trainings at the elementary school level.

Stauffer et al. (2012) investigated the perceptions of teacher and discipline trainings. Teacher perceptions of cyberbullying discipline policies are necessary when implementing effective school-based programs (Cunningham et al., 2016). Teachers beliefs regarding their direct involvement with the development and implementation of discipline policies remained consistent.

Implications for Policy and for Practice

Based on the results of this study, several implications can be made for policy. First, policymakers should use school data regarding crime and safety to create a tiered level of cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies. Second, local school boards should adopt written policies regarding cyberbullying discipline efforts and teacher trainings at each school level. Third, policymakers should implement awareness campaigns each school year.

Implications for practice include prevention and intervention efforts must be provided in elementary schools to address cyberbullying behaviors that may affect student mental health during middle school or high school. School campus principals and/or administrators must gather input from teachers regarding their professional

development needs to ensure teachers are equipped to address incidents that occur on campus or off campus. A concern exists at the elementary school level regarding a lack of professional development trainings to deter cyberbullying perpetrators.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the results discussed in this article, several recommendations for future research can be made. First, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using more current data. Second, researchers should determine impeding factors that may limit cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts at each school level. The degree to which impeding factors reported from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety affect cyberbullying discipline efforts is not known. Third, researchers should examine other forms of harassment compared to cyberbullying to determine the extent to which relationships may exist between cyberbullying and other infractions that administrators and staff must be aware of to use effective prevention and intervention strategies at appropriate school levels to ensure the safety of all students.

Conclusion

Through inferential statistical analyses of national survey data, teacher trainings were much less prevalent at the elementary school level than at the middle school and high school levels for cyberbullying teacher trainings and teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies. Elementary students are least likely to report cyberbullying because of a lack of knowledge regarding cyberbullying incidents. Policymakers and school leaders must ensure that teacher trainings are offered at all school levels to allow administrators to create and implement

effective prevention and intervention methods to protect all students in their school districts.

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Table 2.1

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Cyberbullying Teacher Trainings That Were Offered by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and School Level	Yes *n* of schools	No *n* of schools
2015-2016		
Elementary	(*n* = 328) 63.6%	(*n* = 188) 36.4%
Middle	(*n* = 555) 77.2%	(*n* = 164) 22.8%
High	(*n* = 555) 71.7%	(*n* = 219) 28.3%
2017-2018		
Elementary	(*n* = 456) 68.0%	(*n* = 215) 32.0%
Middle	(*n* = 762) 78.2%	(*n* = 213) 21.8%
High	(*n* = 734) 73.6%	(*n* = 263) 26.4%

Table 2.2

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Teacher Trainings That Were Offered for School-Wide Discipline Policies Related to Intervention and Referral by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and School Level	Yes *n* of schools	No *n* of schools
2015-2016		
Elementary	(*n* = 266) 51.6%	(*n* = 250) 48.4%
Middle	(*n* = 402) 55.9%	(*n* = 317) 44.1%
High	(*n* = 448) 57.9%	(*n* = 326) 42.1%
2017-2018		
Elementary	(*n* = 397) 59.2%	(*n* = 274) 40.8%
Middle	(*n* = 617) 63.3%	(*n* = 358) 36.7%
High	(*n* = 638) 64.0%	(*n* = 359) 36.0%

Table 2.3

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Teacher Trainings That Were Offered for Early Warning Signs of Violent Behavior by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and School Level	Yes *n* of schools	No *n* of schools
2015-2016		
Elementary	(*n* = 239) 46.3%	(*n* = 277) 53.7%
Middle	(*n* = 351) 48.8%	(*n* = 368) 51.2%
High	(*n* = 408) 52.7%	(*n* = 366) 47.3%
2017-2018		
Elementary	(*n* = 350) 52.2%	(*n* = 321) 47.8%
Middle	(*n* = 488) 50.1%	(*n* = 487) 49.9%
High	(*n* = 577) 57.9%	(*n* = 420) 42.1%

Table 2.4

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Teacher Trainings That Were Offered for Student Social, Physical, and Verbal Bullying Behaviors by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and School Level	Yes *n* of schools	No *n* of schools
2015-2016		
Elementary	(*n* = 387) 75.0%	(*n* = 129) 25.0%
Middle	(*n* = 580) 80.7%	(*n* = 139) 19.3%
High	(*n* = 569) 73.5%	(*n* = 205) 26.5%
2017-2018		
Elementary	(*n* = 515) 76.8%	(*n* = 156) 23.2%
Middle	(*n* = 779) 79.9%	(*n* = 196) 20.1%
High	(*n* = 757) 75.9%	(*n* = 240) 24.1%

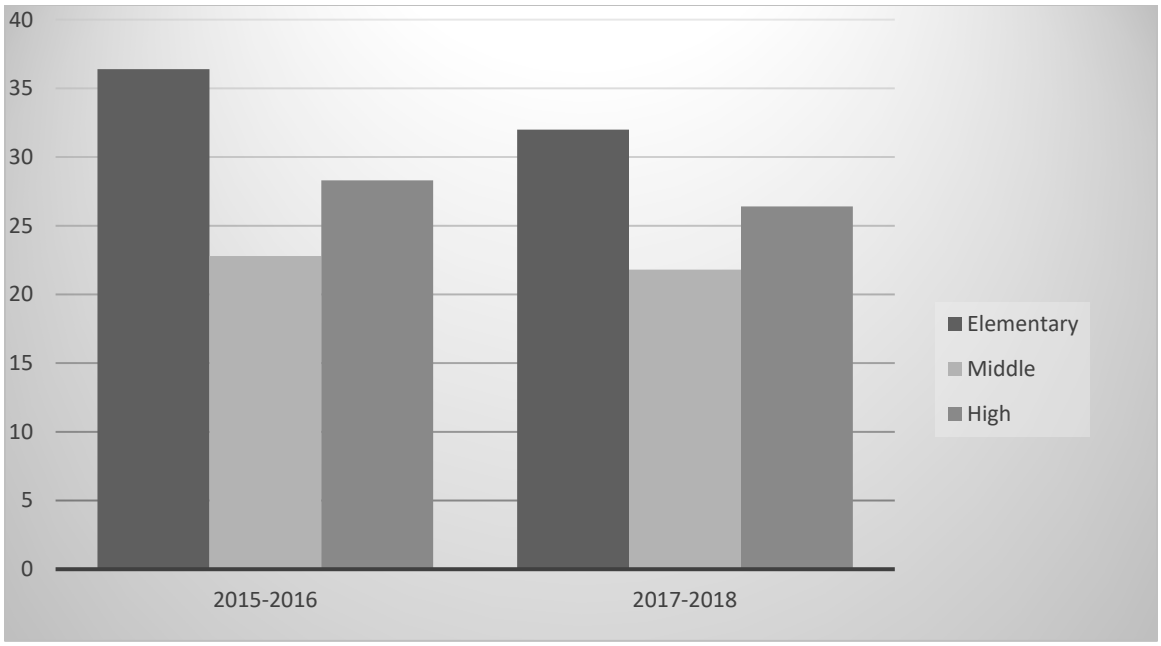

Figure 2.1. Teacher training rates for cyberbully behaviors by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

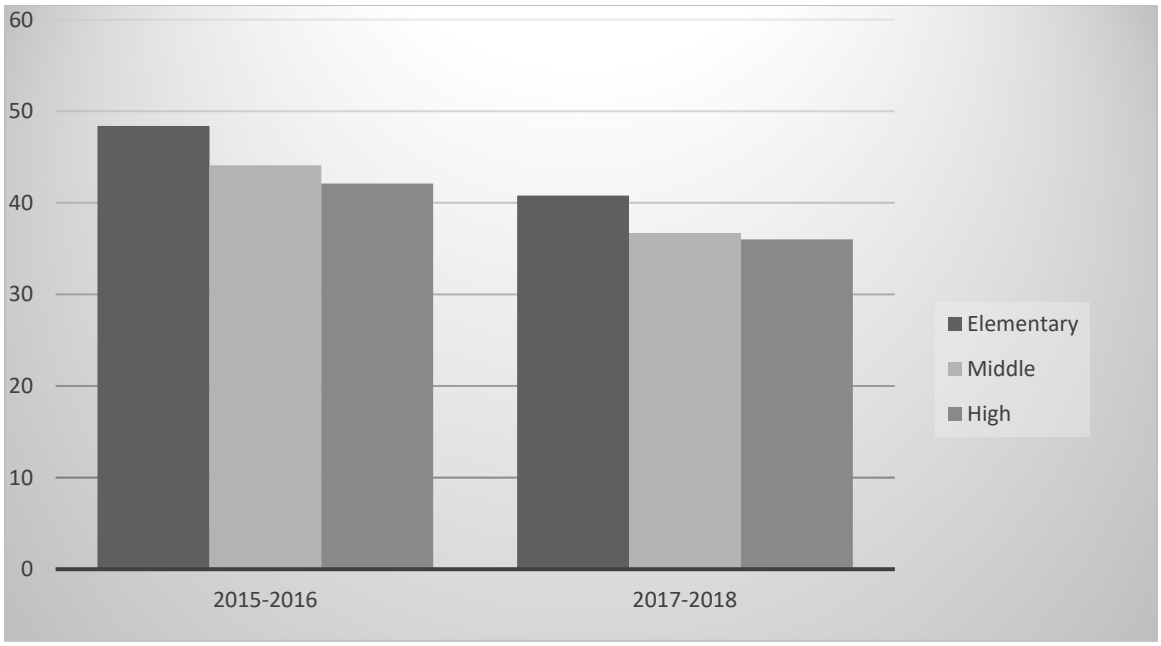

Figure 2.2. Teacher training rates for school-wide discipline policies related to intervention and referral strategies by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

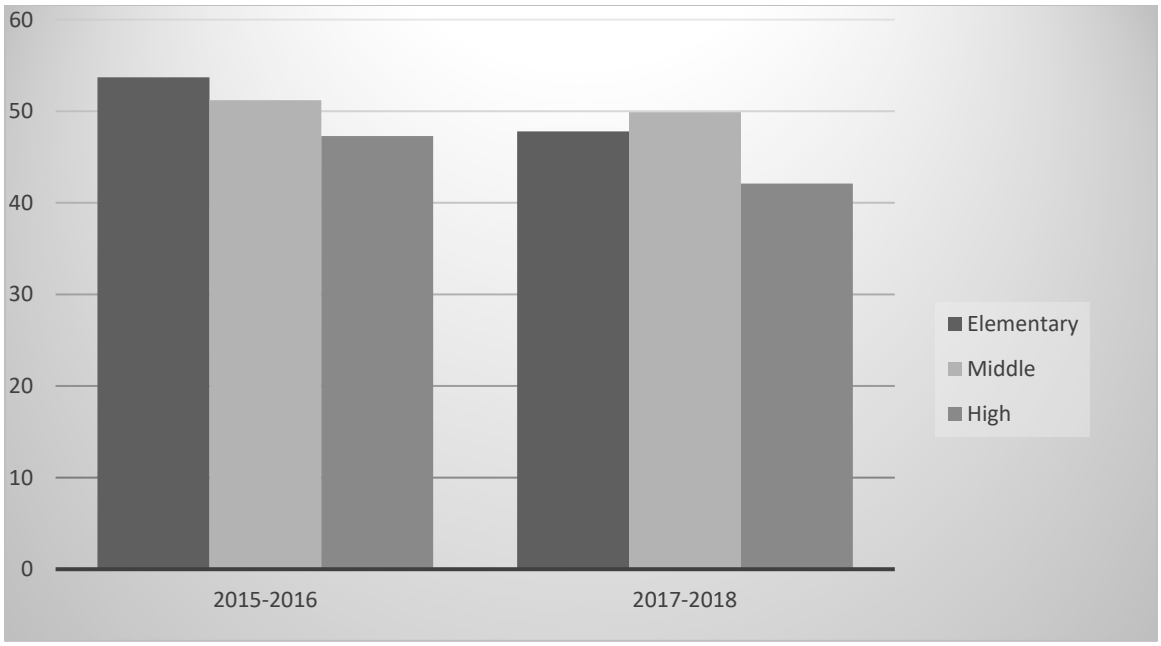

Figure 2.3. Teacher training rates for early warning signs of violent behavior by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

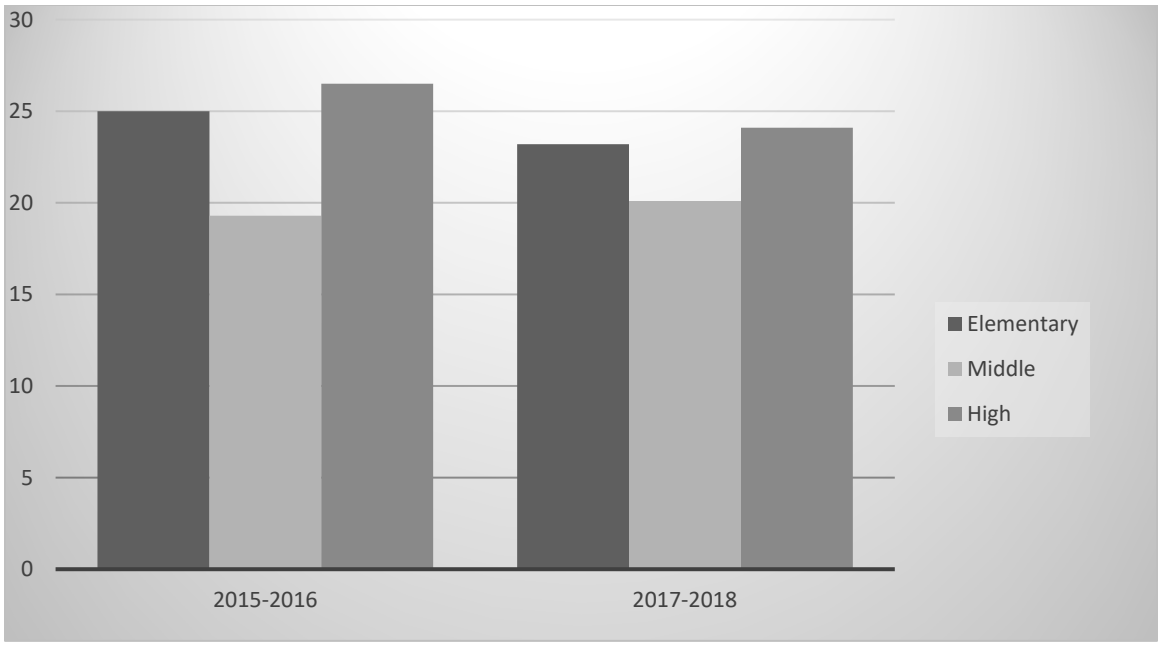

Figure 2.4. Teacher training rates for student social, physical, and verbal bullying behaviors by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

CHAPTER III

DIFFERENCES IN FACTORS THAT IMPEDE DISCIPLINE EFFORTS FOR CYBERBULLYING BY SCHOOL LEVEL: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

Abstract

The degree to which differences might be present in discipline efforts that were limited by (a) inadequate/lack of teacher training, (b) inadequate/lack of parental support, (c) fear of student retaliation, and (d) inadequate funds by school level by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) were addressed in this study using data from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. Inferential statistical procedures revealed the presence of statistically significant differences in inadequate/lack of teacher trainings and fear of student retaliation in a major way. Elementary and middle schools had almost twice the percentage of schools with discipline efforts that were limited in a major way by inadequate/lack of teacher trainings than high schools. Middle and high schools had the same percentage of efforts that were limited by fear of student retaliation in a major way. Implications for policy and for practice were discussed, as well as recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Bullying; Cyberbullying; Discipline efforts; Elementary schools; High schools; Impeding factors; Inadequate funds; Middle schools; Parent support; School Survey on Crime and Safety; Teachers; Teacher training

DIFFERENCES IN FACTORS THAT IMPEDE DISCIPLINE EFFORTS FOR CYBERBULLYING BY SCHOOL LEVEL: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

Hinduja and Patchin (2015) defined cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and electronic devices" (p. 11). In 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics noted results from the National Crime Victimization Survey administered to almost 25 million students between the ages of 12-18 during the 2012-2013 school year. In that survey, 6.9% of students reported that they had been victims of cyberbullying (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In 2019, the National Center for Education Statistics reported data from the 2010 and 2016 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) from approximately 3,000 public schools where principals stated daily/weekly cyberbullying increased from 7.9% in 2010 to 12% in 2016. In just six years, this change is reflective of a 150% increase in daily/weekly cyberbullying. Monthly cyberbullying incidents reported by principals increased from 9.4% in 2010 to 14.9% in 2016. Occasional cyberbullying incidents reported by principals increased from 45% in 2010 to 54% in 2016. The most substantial difference from the 2010 and 2016 SSOCS was the rate of cyberbullying incidents that were never reported by principals decreased from 37.7% in 2010 to 19.1% in 2016.

Prevalence rates were also examined by Moore, Huebner, and Hills (2012) who administered an electronic bullying survey to 855 Grade 7 and Grade 8 students. In regard to cyberbullying incidents, 14% of students stated they participated in cyberbullying, and 20% stated they had been cyberbullied. Of the students who were cybervictims, 3% stated they had been a victim of electronic bullying several times a week. Student gender had a substantial relationship to electronic bullying. Girls were

more likely to participate in electronic bullying than were boys. Moreover, girls and students of color were more likely to be a victim of electronic bullying than were boys.

In a study on cyberbullying prevalence in Serbia, Popović-Ćitić, Djurić, and Cvetković (2011) investigated the rate of cyberbullying incidents that occurred among 387 middle school students between the ages of 11-15 from five different schools in Belgrade. Students completed a survey to determine the frequency of cybervictimization by submitting demographic data, frequency of cell phone and computer usage, and experiences with cyberbullying (e.g., denigration, harassment, and outing). Of the sample, 20% of students reported they had been a victim of cyberbullying and 10% of students indicated that they had been a cyberbullying perpetrator.

Due to the ability of cyberbullying perpetrators to cause harm to their victims in and out of school settings, principals and teachers face a myriad of challenges in their efforts to decrease the prevalence of cyberbullying incidents (Tomczyk & Wloch, 2019). According to Tomczyk and Wloch (2019), cyberbullying prevention barriers encountered by teachers include student hesitation to share cyberbullying experiences because of age differences, parents neglecting to assist with cyberbullying interventions when they occur at home, and teachers lacking knowledge regarding new digital information and technology. To assist teachers with interventions, Tomczyk and Wloch (2019) recommended online cyberbully safety programs be implemented at school campuses.

Similar to Tomczyk and Wloch (2019), Hinduja and Patchin (2015) agreed school administrators and teachers should ensure safety prevention efforts are implemented at school campuses where cyberbullying might interrupt student learning. Recommended was that school administrators and teachers have universal definitions for intimidation,

bullying, and harassment. Remedial actions and a series of consequences should be administered to cyberbully perpetrators. Detailed procedures regarding cyberbullying reporting and investigations must be clearly understood by students and school personnel (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015).

In regard to efforts to address cyberbullying, Cunningham et al. (2016) explored different perspectives concerning the effects of antibullying programs from 103 teachers who taught students in Kindergarten through Grade 8 in Canadian public and Catholic schools. Results were that schoolteachers believed they were not equipped to address off-campus cyberbullying incidents (Cunningham et al., 2016). Time restraints initiated by curriculum requirements prevented teachers from using cyberbullying prevention strategies, trainings, and responses in a timely manner. Teachers also believed principals assigned inappropriate consequences to cyberbully perpetrators (Cunningham et al., 2016). Additional barriers included lack of support from campus principals and uncooperative parents, both of which limited the effects of cyberbullying interventions.

Because uncooperative parents may be linked to the different cyberbully roles of adolescents, Buelga, Martínez-Ferrer, and Cava (2017) addressed the limited literature available regarding family factors as related to cyberbullying prevention and intervention. Failed mediating strategies by parents may hinder efforts to decrease the prevalence of cyberbullying (Bartolo, Palermiti, Servidio, Musso, & Costabile, 2019). Cyberbully communication efforts must be grounded in parent support and good relationships within the family structure to ensure that young children may increase the frequency of communication with their parents regarding cyberbullying victimization (Özdemir, 2014). Although parents and schoolteachers are important components to cyberbullying

prevention and intervention, school district and state level efforts should be included as members of the school community participate in the development of an effective cyberbullying policy (Corcoran & McGuckin, 2014).

In 2017, cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts in a New Jersey school district resulted in a lawsuit by the parents of Mallory Grossman after the 12-year old took her life (Zaremba, 2019). Mallory was in Grade 6 when she received harassing text messages via Snapchat and Instagram from classmates over a period of several months. A group of four girls consistently told Mallory that she did not have any friends and that she was a loser. The aggravation negatively affected Mallory who did not want to attend school anymore and caused her to have headaches and stomach aches. Although Mallory's parents spoke with teachers, the assistant principal, and counselors regarding the distressing texts, the parents alleged the school did not file a Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Report as required by the New Jersey Department of Education. In addition to the failure of the school to respond to cyberbullying incidents, Mallory's parents also believed the cyberbully perpetrator parents lack of interest to assist their children with mediation during the investigation contributed to Mallory's suicide. Mallory's Law, passed by the U.S. Senate, requires parents of cyberbully perpetrators to be involved in interventions if the harassment reaches a certain severity level. If parents disregard the intervention process, they could face civil liabilities.

Young, Tully, and Ramirez (2017) noted a parental lack of support because of a reluctance to accept their child's wrongdoing. The dissatisfaction that parents have with the results of administrative discipline policies or interventions also influenced parent failure to participate in cyberbullying interventions. Parent awareness efforts must be

communicated regularly by school personnel because bullying behaviors continue to affect students after their school day.

Statement of the Problem

Investigating the implementation of discipline policies to address cyberbullying is necessary to determine the extent to which effective intervention systems of application are present (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015; Tomczyk & Wloch, 2019). Cunningham et al. (2016) explored different perspectives that educators had regarding the influence of antibullying programs. Teachers strongly believe cyberbullying is becoming more difficult to detect due to complex media platforms that are used by cyberbully perpetrators (Cunningham et al., 2016).

In addition to lack of teacher training, most teachers do not agree with the discipline consequences that administrators assign for cyberbullying behaviors (Cunningham et al., 2016). Teachers are less inclined to effectively address cyberbullying incidents when districts and/or campuses use top-down anti-cyberbullying intervention development (Cunningham et al., 2016). Teachers lack parental support that may be used to enhance cyberbullying intervention strategies to equip students with tools they may use to prevent online harassment from cyberbullying perpetrators (Cunningham et al., 2016).

Purpose of the Study

Four purposes are present in this article. The first purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which differences were present in discipline efforts that are limited by inadequate/lack of teacher training by school level. The second purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which differences existed in discipline efforts and lack of

parental support by school level. The third purpose was to ascertain the degree to which differences were present in discipline efforts and fear of student retaliation by school level. The fourth purpose was to determine the extent to which differences existed in discipline efforts and inadequate funding.

Significance of the Study

Few researchers (e.g., Chisholm, 2014) have analyzed factors that impede cyberbullying discipline efforts by school level. Occasional cyberbullying incidents reported by principals increased from 45% in 2010 to 54% in 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). School administrators must remain persistent as they share digital ethics and cyber safety with teachers and parents because of the consistent use of technology by students throughout their school day (Davis & Schmidt, 2016). Increased parent awareness may serve as a vital component to decrease prevalence rates (Young, Tully, & Ramirez, 2017).

Research Questions

The following overarching research question was addressed in this investigation: What is the difference in the frequency of factors regarding discipline efforts by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years? The following sub-questions was addressed: (a) What are the differences between efforts limited by inadequate/lack of teacher training by school level?; (b) What are the differences between efforts limited by inadequate/lack of parental support by school level?; (c) What are the differences between efforts limited by fear of student retaliation by school level?; (d) What are the differences in efforts limited by inadequate funds by

school level?; and (e) What are the consistencies between impeding factors for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years?

Method

Research Design

For this empirical investigation, a non-experimental, causal-comparative research design was used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data that were analyzed herein constituted archival data that had already occurred (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Therefore, no determination of cause-effect relationships can be made. The independent variable of school level cannot be manipulated. The dependent variables were responses to survey questions for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years in the United States. A disadvantage to the design of the study is the independent variable is already established and the dependent variables cannot be controlled.

Participants and Instrumentation

A sample composed of 2,092 elementary, middle, and high schools located in the United States was used in this study. The SSOCS (2018), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education with data administered by the U.S. Census Bureau, was used for this study. The SSOCS (2018) contains crime and safety data from U.S. public school administrators and principals. Survey items include: (a) school practices and programs, (b) staff training, (c) disciplinary problems and actions, (d) parent and community involvement at school, (e) number of incidents, (f) school security staff, (g) school mental health services, (h) limitations on crime prevention, (i) frequency of crime and violence at school, and (j) school characteristics (SSOCS, 2018). Researchers may use the data to examine the

relationship between school characteristics and violent and seriously violent crimes in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and combined schools. Additionally, the SSOCS (2018) can be used to determine which schools use crime prevention procedures, strategies, and policies. The SSOCS (2018) has been conducted seven times: 1999-2000, 2003-2004, 2005-2006, 2007-2008, 2009-2010, 2015-2016, and 2017-2018. The SSOCS (2018) includes definitions for clarification regarding terms that were contained in the survey.

According to the SSOCS (2018), for the purpose of this study, elementary schools were defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade Pre-K through Grade 3. Middle schools were defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade 4 through Grade 9 (SSOCS, 2018). High schools were defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade 9 through Grade 12 and a highest grade level that is within Grade 10 and through Grade 12 (SSOCS, 2018). Specific survey questions from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 SSOCS (2018) that was analyzed in this article include: (a) To what extent does lack of teacher support for school policies limit your school's efforts to reduce or prevent crime?; (b) To what extent does lack of parental support for school policies limit your school's efforts to reduce or prevent crime?; (c) To what extent does teachers' fear of student retaliation limit your school's efforts to reduce or prevent crime?; and (d) To what extent does inadequate funds limit your school's efforts to reduce or prevent crime? Participants responded with either Major Way, Minor Way, or Does Not Limit.

Archival data were previously obtained from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 National School Safety Dataset and converted to Statistical Package for Social Sciences

(SPSS) data (Field, 2018). A codebook was used to recode the data. Dependent variables were responses to four questions regarding: (a) efforts limited by inadequate/lack of teacher training, (b) efforts limited by inadequate/lack of parental support, (c) efforts limited by fear of student retaliation, and (d) efforts limited by inadequate funds by school level. The independent variable was the school level.

Results

To determine the degree to which differences were present in limited factors regarding discipline efforts by school level for the 2015-2016 school year, Pearson chi-square procedures were conducted. The statistical procedure was viewed as the optimal statistical procedure to use because frequency data were present for school level and for the four dependent variables: (a) efforts limited by inadequate/lack of teacher training, (b) efforts limited by inadequate/lack of parental support, (c) efforts limited by fear of student retaliation, and (d) efforts limited by inadequate funds. Because these variables were categorical, the Pearson chi-square procedure was used (Slate & Rojas-LeBouef, 2011). In addition, with the large sample sizes, the available sample size per cell was more than five. Therefore, the assumptions for using a Pearson chi-square procedure were met.

For the first research question for the 2015-2016 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 27.52$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .08 (Cohen, 1988). As revealed in Table 3.1, elementary and middle schools had almost twice the percentage of schools with discipline efforts that were limited in a major way by inadequate/lack of teacher trainings than high schools. Concerning the 2017-2018 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) =$

12.04, $p = .02$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .05 (Cohen, 1988). Elementary schools had almost twice the percentage of middle and high schools with discipline efforts that were limited in a major way by inadequate/lack of teacher trainings. Depicted in Figure 3.1 are these percentages by school level.

Insert Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 about here

Concerning the second research question for the 2015-2016 school year, the result did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(4) = 7.64$, $p = .11$. Delineated in Table 3.2 are similar results present for this survey question across all three school levels. Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the result was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 6.53$, $p = .16$. Again, similar results were present for this survey question across the elementary school level. Illustrated in Figure 3.2 are the percentages for this survey item by school level.

Insert Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2 about here

With respect to the third research question for the 2015-2016 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 19.73$, $p = .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .07 (Cohen, 1988). As revealed in Table 3.3, middle and high schools had the same percentage of efforts that were limited by fear of student retaliation in a major way. Elementary schools had a lower percentage of efforts than middle or high schools. Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the result was statistically

significant, $\chi^2(4) = 24.18$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .07 (Cohen, 1988). Elementary schools had the most discipline efforts that were limited by fear of student retaliation. Middle schools had the second most and high schools had the fewest discipline efforts that were limited by fear of student retaliation. Delineated in Table 3.3 are the descriptive statistics for these analyses. Shown in Figure 3.3 are the percentages for this survey item by school level.

Insert Table 3.3 and Figure 3.3 about here

With respect to the fourth research question for the 2015-2016 school year, the result was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 2.94$, $p = .57$. Delineated in Table 3.4 are the descriptive statistics for efforts limited due to inadequate funds. Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the result was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 7.50$, $p = .11$. Again, all three school levels reported similar efforts that were limited due to inadequate funds. Depicted in Figure 3.4 are the percentages for this survey item by school level.

Insert Table 3.4 and Figure 3.4 about here

Discussion

Data regarding major limited factors for discipline efforts were obtained and analyzed from the national SSOCS for two school years. Inferential statistical analyses revealed that efforts were limited in a major way by inadequate/lack of teacher trainings training were statistically significantly different by school level (i.e., elementary, middle,

and high) for both the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years, elementary and middle schools had almost twice the percentage of schools with discipline efforts that were severely limited by inadequate/lack of teacher trainings than were high schools.

Discipline efforts that were severely limited by fear of student retaliation were also statistically significant for the 2015-2016 school year. Middle and high schools had the same percentage of efforts that were limited. Elementary schools had a slightly lower percentage of efforts than middle or high schools. During the 2017-2018 school year, the result was statistically significant. Elementary schools had the most discipline efforts that were limited by fear of student retaliation. Middle schools had the second most and high schools had the fewest discipline efforts that were limited by fear of student retaliation.

Efforts limited by inadequate/lack of parent support were not statistically significant for the 2015-2016 school year. A consistent stair-step effect was observed in that elementary schools reported the most efforts that were limited by parent support. Middle schools provided the second most efforts that were limited by parent support. High schools reported the least efforts that were limited by parent support. Although results for efforts limited by inadequate/lack of parent support were not statistically significantly different at the conventional level of statistical significance for the 2017-2018 school year, elementary schools reported the most efforts that were limited by parent support. High schools provided the second most efforts that were limited by parent support. Middle schools reported the least efforts that were limited by parent support.

Regarding efforts limited by inadequate funds, results were not statistically significant for the 2015-2016 school year. Similar results were present for this survey question across all three school levels. Concerning efforts limited by inadequate funds for the 2017-2018 school year, results were not statistically significant. Again, similar results were present for this survey question across all three school levels.

In this investigation for two school years, elementary schools consistently reported the most limited efforts due to inadequate/lack of parent support. Middle schools reported the second most limited efforts due to inadequate/lack of parent support. Inadequate/lack of teacher training and inadequate funds were also consistent throughout the study.

Connections with Existing Literature

Clearly established in this nationwide study were findings about major factors for discipline efforts that were limited at the elementary school level. In previous articles, Tomczyk and Wloch (2019) and Hinduja and Patchin (2015) concurred that school administrators and teachers should ensure safety prevention efforts are implemented at school campuses where cyberbullying might interrupt student learning. Bartolo et al. (2019) examined failed mediation strategies by parents that may hinder efforts to decrease the prevalence of cyberbullying. Young et al. (2017) also noted a parental lack of support because of a reluctance to accept their child's wrongdoing.

Implications for Policy and for Practice

Based on the results of this study, several implications can be made for policy. First, policymakers should secure adequate funding for discipline efforts at all school levels. Second, a district-wide cyberbullying discipline policy with teacher, parent, and

funding resources should be shared via online and in print. Third, policymakers should implement awareness campaigns each school year.

Implications for practice include teacher initiatives for discipline issues at each school level. Teachers are more likely to enforce efforts if they are vested in the discipline plan. Parent initiatives should also be used at the campus level to engage parents in discipline efforts that will be enforced throughout the school community.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the results discussed in this article, several recommendations for future research can be made. First, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using more recent data. Second, researchers should determine the differences in teacher trainings regarding discipline efforts at each school level. The degree to which teacher trainings reported from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety affect cyberbullying discipline efforts is not known. Third, researchers should examine additional forms of harassment compared to cyberbullying to determine the extent to which a correlation may exist between cyberbullying and other infractions that school staff must be aware of to implement effective school safety intervention and prevention strategies at appropriate school levels.

Conclusion

Through inferential statistical analyses of national cyberbullying survey data, limited factors regarding discipline efforts were much more prevalent at the elementary school level than at the middle school and high school levels for efforts limited by inadequate/lack of teacher training, inadequate/lack of parent support, and inadequate funds. Major efforts for elementary schools were limited due to fear of student retaliation

for the latter school year. School leaders and policymakers must be aware of major factors that might limit school discipline efforts.

Students benefit from adequate teacher trainings, parent support, and funding at all grade levels. Efforts that enhance the effectiveness of discipline management systems must be initiated at the elementary school level by campus administrators. As school leaders sustain efforts that will ensure student safety, the implementation of adequate discipline efforts at all grade levels will decrease students fear of retaliation.

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Table 3.1

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Efforts Limited by Inadequate/Lack of Teacher Training by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and School Level	Major *n* of schools	Minor *n* of schools	Not Exist *n* of schools
2015-2016			
Elementary	(*n* = 32) 6.2%	(*n* = 158) 30.6%	(*n* = 326) 63.2%
Middle	(*n* = 43) 6.0%	(*n* = 228) 31.7%	(*n* = 448) 62.3%
High	(*n* = 30) 3.9%	(*n* = 328) 42.4%	(*n* = 416) 53.7%
2017-2018			
Elementary	(*n* = 50) 7.5%	(*n* = 207) 30.8%	(*n* = 414) 61.7%
Middle	(*n* = 54) 5.5%	(*n* = 357) 36.6%	(*n* = 564) 57.8%
High	(*n* = 51) 5.1%	(*n* = 380) 38.1%	(*n* = 566) 56.8%

Table 3.2

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Efforts Limited by Inadequate/Lack of Parent Support by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and School Level	Major *n* of schools	Minor *n* of schools	Not Exist *n* of schools
2015-2016			
Elementary	(*n* = 43) 8.3%	(*n* = 180) 34.9%	(*n* = 293) 56.8%
Middle	(*n* = 55) 7.6%	(*n* = 278) 38.7%	(*n* = 386) 53.7%
High	(*n* = 49) 6.3%	(*n* = 326) 42.1%	(*n* = 399) 51.6%
2017-2018			
Elementary	(*n* = 65) 9.7%	(*n* = 214) 31.9%	(*n* = 392) 58.4%
Middle	(*n* = 83) 8.5%	(*n* = 370) 37.9%	(*n* = 522) 53.5%
High	(*n* = 86) 8.6%	(*n* = 357) 35.8%	(*n* = 554) 55.6%

Table 3.3

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Efforts Limited by Fear of Student Retaliation by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and School Level	Major *n* of schools	Minor *n* of schools	Not Exist *n* of schools
2015-2016			
Elementary	(*n* = 8) 1.6%	(*n* = 86) 16.7%	(*n* = 422) 81.8%
Middle	(*n* = 18) 2.5%	(*n* = 135) 18.8%	(*n* = 566) 78.7%
High	(*n* = 20) 2.6%	(*n* = 197) 25.5%	(*n* = 557) 72.0%
2017-2018			
Elementary	(*n* = 22) 3.3%	(*n* = 128) 19.1%	(*n* = 521) 77.6%
Middle	(*n* = 29) 3.0%	(*n* = 231) 23.7%	(*n* = 715) 73.3%
High	(*n* = 22) 2.2%	(*n* = 292) 29.3%	(*n* = 683) 68.5%

Table 3.4

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Efforts Limited by Inadequate Funds by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and School Level	Major *n* of schools	Minor *n* of schools	Not Exist *n* of schools
2015-2016			
Elementary	(*n* = 150) 29.1%	(*n* = 167) 32.4%	(*n* = 199) 38.6%
Middle	(*n* = 186) 25.9%	(*n* = 253) 35.2%	(*n* = 280) 38.9%
High	(*n* = 195) 25.2%	(*n* = 275) 35.5%	(*n* = 304) 39.3%
2017-2018			
Elementary	(*n* = 251) 37.4%	(*n* = 183) 27.3%	(*n* = 237) 35.3%
Middle	(*n* = 361) 37.0%	(*n* = 286) 29.3%	(*n* = 328) 33.6%
High	(*n* = 331) 33.2%	(*n* = 327) 32.8%	(*n* = 339) 34.0%

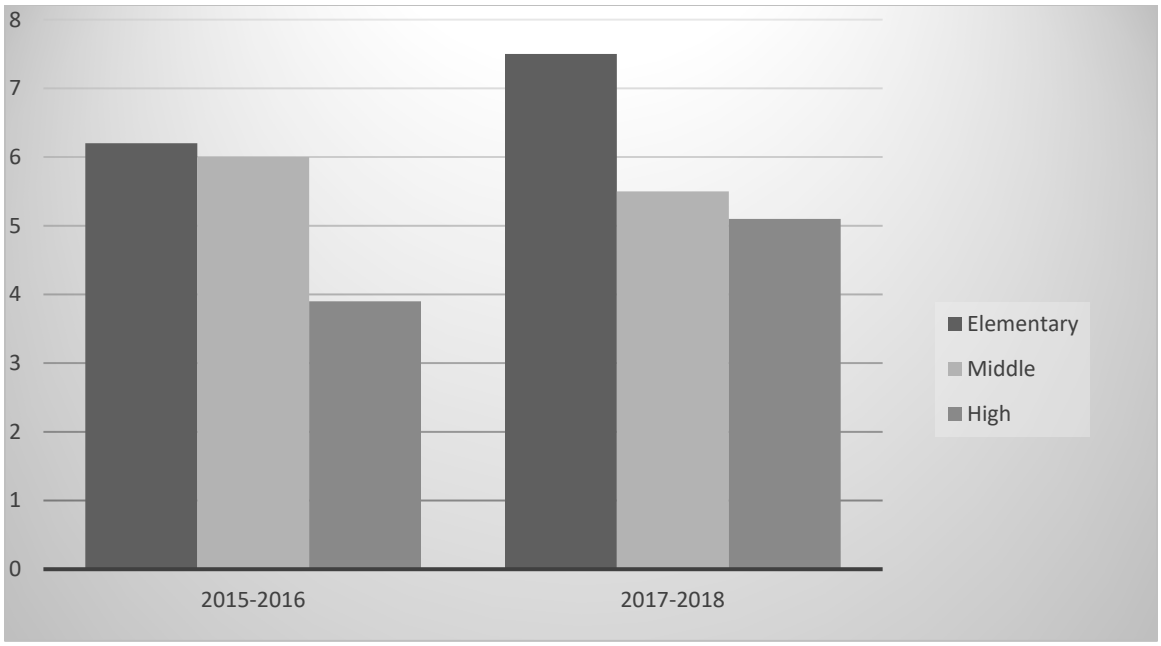

Figure 3.1. Efforts limited by inadequate/lack of teacher training by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

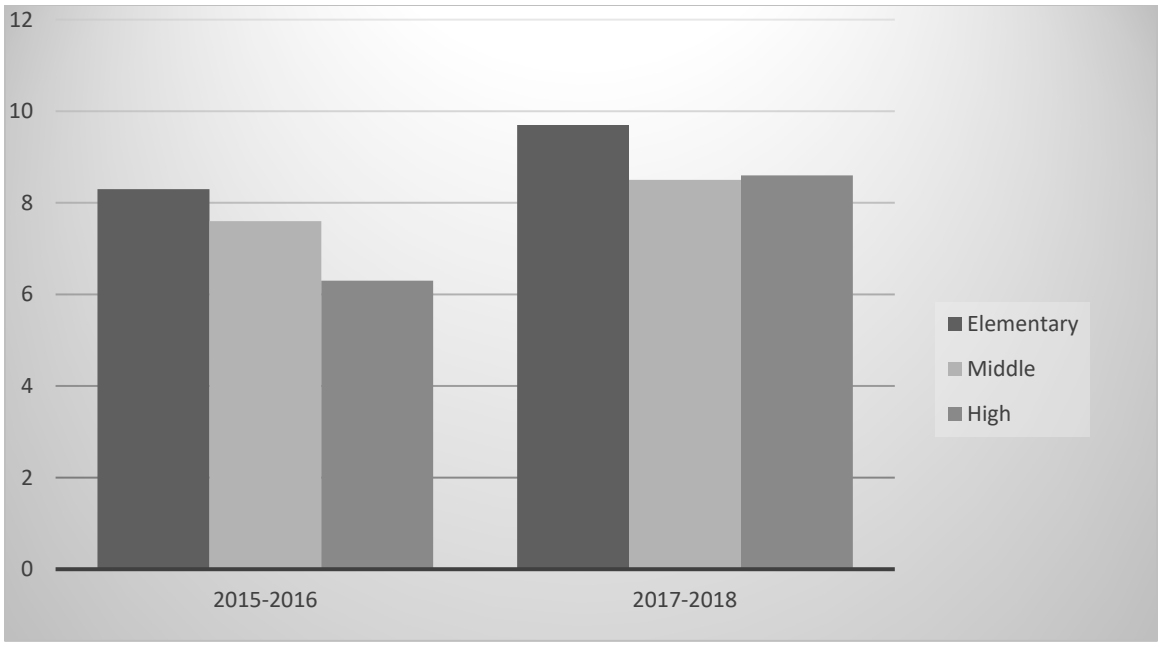

Figure 3.2. Efforts limited by inadequate/lack of parent support by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

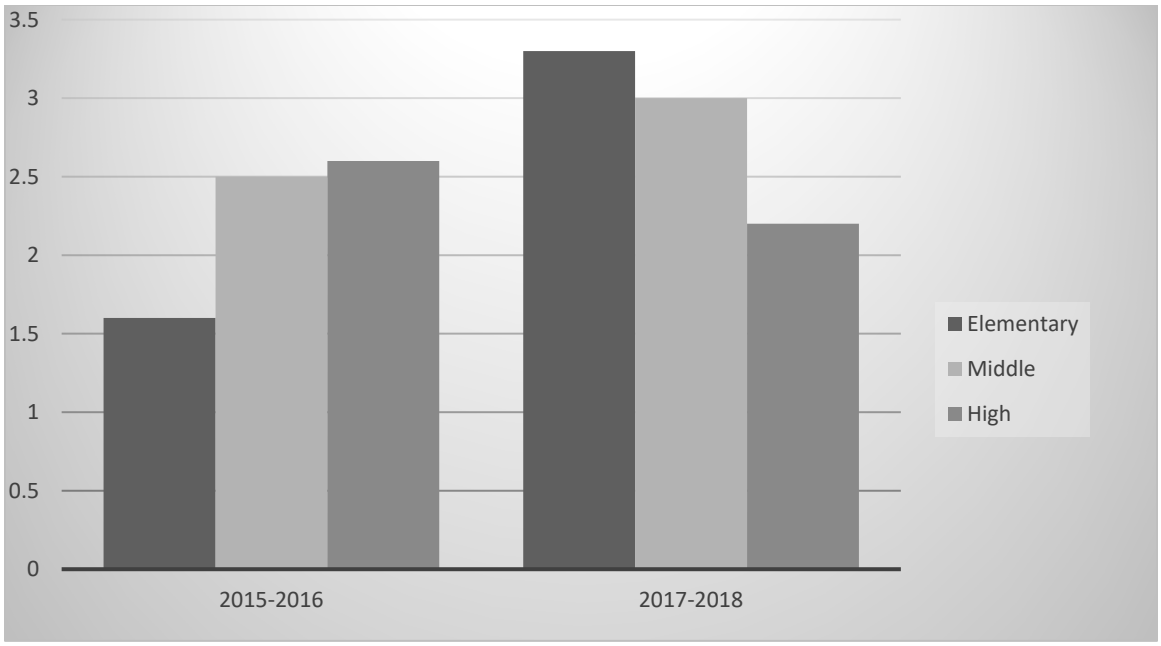

Figure 3.3. Efforts limited by fear of student retaliation by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

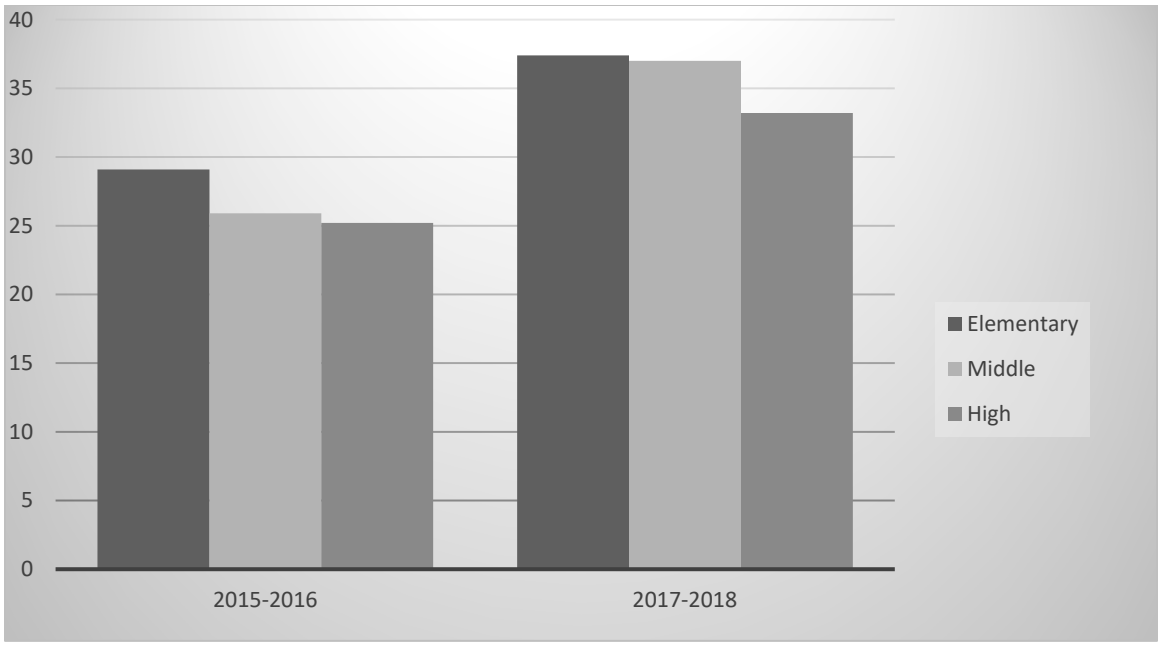

Figure 3.4. Efforts limited by inadequate funds by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

CHAPTER IV

DIFFERENCES IN RATES OF OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT AND CYBERBULLYING BY SCHOOL LEVEL: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

Abstract

The degree to which differences were present in rates of (a) student bullying, (b) student sexual harassment of students, and (c) student harassment based on gender identity by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) were addressed in this study using data from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. Inferential statistical procedures revealed the presence of statistically significant differences in student bullying, student sexual harassment, and student harassment incidents based on gender identity. Elementary schools had half of the percentage of daily student bullying incidents compared to high schools for both school years. High schools reported the most student sexual harassment and student harassment based on gender identity that occasionally happened. Implications for policy and for practice were discussed, as well as recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Bullying; Cyberbullying; Discipline efforts; Elementary schools; Gender identity; Harassment; High schools; Middle schools; School Survey on Crime and Safety; Teachers

DIFFERENCES IN RATES OF OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT AND CYBERBULLYING BY SCHOOL LEVEL: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

Cyberbullying has been defined as any behaviors performed using electronic or digital media by individuals or a group of individuals who repeatedly communicate aggressive or hostile messages intended to harm or cause the discomfort of others and the identity of the cyberbully may not be known (Camerini, Marciano, Carrara, & Schulz, 2020). Though researchers (Kavuk-Kalendar & Keser, 2018; Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014; Slonje, Smith, & Frisen, 2013) have examined cyberbullying incidents at the secondary level, limited research investigations are available for the elementary grade level (Giménez-Gualdo, Arnaiz-Sánchez, Cerezo-Ramírez, & Prodócimo, 2018). Educators must examine the frequency of harassment that may proceed cybervictimization due to different forms of cyberbullying that have increased from digital technology use (Hornor, 2018).

Digital technology and social media among boys and girls have concerns regarding student mental health (Kowalski et al., 2019). In an analysis of cyberbullying incidents, Depaolis and Williford (2015) analyzed prevalence rate data for cybervictimization. They established rates between 14% and 22% for elementary school boys and girls. In an earlier study, Safaria (2016) investigated the prevalence of cybervictimization because student internet usage increased from 35% to 45% in 2010. Participants were 102 Grade 7 Indonesian students, primarily 12- and 13-year-old boys, who completed a questionnaire regarding the frequency of cyberbullying behaviors. Of this sample, only 14.3% of students indicated that they had never been a victim of cyberbullying, 25.5% of students reported they experienced cyberbullying occasionally,

20.6% stated they experienced cyberbullying sometimes, 27.5% acknowledged they experienced cyberbullying often, and 12.7% reported they experienced cyberbullying almost every day. The majority of the students, 80%, stated they experienced cyberbullying from occasionally to almost every day. Additionally, Safaria (2016) noted the presence of a positive relationship between participant psychological distress and cybervictimization. Some boys and girls may feel anxious, sad, or fearful because of cyberbullying incidents that cause negative effects on student psychological health.

Cybervictims suffer mental health issues because of cyberbullying. Beran et al. (2015) surveyed 26,078 boys and girls in Grades 6 through 10 from 436 schools in Canada regarding cybervictimization. Behaviors associated with cyberbullying incidents included suicidal ideation, aggression, and depression. Similar to the González-Calatayud (2018) study, girls were 6% more likely to be a cybervictim than boys (Beran et al., 2015). Children who have experienced one or more kinds of harassment related to cyberbullying are more likely to have suicidal ideations (Sharma, Kishore, Sharma, & Duggal, 2017).

In a study in London, Fahy et al. (2016) examined the relationship between mental health issues and cyberbullying. The participants included 2,480 teenagers at 25 schools who completed a survey to determine whether a relationship was present between cyberbullying and symptoms of social anxiety or depression that might affect student mental well-being. The authors noted cyberbullying effects on mental health constituted a public health concern, 42.2% of participants stated they had been involved with cyberbullying in the past 12 months, 20% of the participants reported they had been cyberbullied, 24.8% of participants reported they were depressed due to cyberbullying

incidents, and 28.5% reported they were experiencing social anxiety symptoms. Females were more likely than boys to experience depression and social anxiety (Fahy et al., 2016).

Student mental health may lead to additional risk factors. In a 1-year longitudinal study, Cappadocia et al. (2013) addressed prevalence and risk factors associated with cyberbullying and cybervictimization. Participants were 1,972 high school students in Canada who completed surveys regarding the frequency of cyberbullying or cybervictimization over the last two months. Cybervictimization was reported by 13.5% of participants and cyberbullying was reported by 11.6% of participants. Boys and girls who consumed alcohol were two times more likely to perpetrate cyberbullying incidents (Cappadocia et al., 2013). Higher levels of depression were also present for Grade 9 students because of the transitional year. More girls than boys had been victims of cyberbullying. Similarities between cyberbullying and social forms of traditional bullying (e.g., gossiping and spreading rumors) were also present (Cappadocia et al., 2013).

Cyberbully perpetrators use gossip and rumors to damage student relationships and the reputations of cybervictims (Fahy et al., 2016). In their study, Mcloughlin et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between student mental health and social connectedness. Online surveys were completed by 229 students between the ages of 12 and 17 in Australia. Three areas were measured in the survey: (a) cyberbullying, (b) social connectedness, and (c) negative emotional states. Of this sample, 27% of participants had been a victim of cyberbullying. Girls were less socially connected to their peers than boys, and girls were more depressed, stressed, and anxious than boys.

An example of how depression may cause girls to commit suicide acts more than boys, the Gabriella Green case will now be discussed. Gabriella was a victim of a fatal incident in 2018 that could have been avoided if a peer did not attempt to ruin her reputation by causing her emotional stress. Gabriella was a 12-year-old Florida pre-teen who hanged herself after being cyberbullied by her peers. She committed suicide because of rumors shared on social media accounts by a middle school student who stated Gabriella had a sexually transmitted disease. Tanya Green, Gabriella's mother, reported that she blamed the school system and the parents of the students who were involved with the cyberbullying incident because of the lack of concern for the safety of her daughter (The Associated Press, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Cybervictimization is a direct result of behaviors initiated by cyberbully perpetrators (Cappadocia, Craig, & Pepler, 2013). As students are victimized by peers or other individuals using digital media, it is important to investigate the frequency of cyberbullying behaviors compared to other school infractions to ascertain the appropriate intervention programs for different school levels (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013). Cyberbullying behaviors are difficult for educators to identify without proper training (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011).

Educators must develop programs, disseminate information, and use student peers as resources to identify negative behaviors at each school level. Peers may assist educators with information about victims that were related to depression, social problems, academic problems, and substance abuse that may affect the mental and physical safety of victims (Cappadocia et al., 2013). Cybervictimization may drastically

affect student mental well-being (Fahy et al., 2016). Social connectedness using peer-to-peer interventions should be used to minimize the negative effects of cyberbully incidents (Mcloughlin et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which differences were present in the frequency of student bullying by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and secondary). The second purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which differences existed in the frequency of student sexual harassment of students by school level. The third purpose was to determine the extent to which differences were present in the frequency of student harassment based on gender identity by school level.

Significance of the Study

Although researchers (e.g., Chung-Do et al., 2015; Oldfield, 2016) have explored social connectedness related to school, few researchers (e.g., Mcloughlin et al., 2019) have examined the social connectedness that might prevent student mental health issues in cyberbullying victims at all school levels. Educators have used positive behavior interventions to address student misbehaviors; however, the amount of time students spend on digital media has affected the type of positive school behavior programs educators must implement to deter deviant behaviors that affect student mental health (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013). In this article, data regarding anti-cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs that might address student mental health at three school levels were analyzed. Educators and district personnel must examine the prevalence of student victimization levels and utilize proactive measures.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that was addressed in this investigation was: What is the difference in how often harassment other than cyberbullying occurs by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school)? The following sub-questions were addressed: (a) What is the difference in the frequency of cyberbullying incidents and student bullying by school level?; (b) What is the difference in the frequency of cyberbullying incidents and student sexual harassment of students by school level?; (c) What is the difference in the frequency of cyberbullying incidents and student harassment based on gender identity by school level?; and (d) What are the consistencies in other forms of harassment for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years?

Method

Research Design

For this empirical investigation, a non-experimental, causal-comparative research design was used (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Dependent variables were responses to three questions regarding: (a) frequency of student bullying, (b) frequency of student sexual harassment of students, and (c) frequency of student harassment based on gender identity. The independent variable was school level and could not be manipulated. Archival data from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 National School Safety Dataset were analyzed in this study.

Participants and Instrumentation

A sample composed of 2,092 elementary, middle, and high schools located in the United States were present in this study. The School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics on behalf of the U.S.

Department of Education with data administered by the U.S. Census Bureau was used for this study. The School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) contains crime and safety data from U.S. public school principals and other school administrators. Survey topics include: (a) school practices and programs, (b) parent and community involvement at school, (c) school security staff, (d) school mental health services, (e) staff training, (f) limitations on crime prevention, (g) frequency of crime and violence at school, (h) number of incidents, (i) disciplinary problems and actions, and (j) school characteristics (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018). Researchers may use the data to investigate the relationship between school characteristics and violent and seriously violent crimes in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and combined schools. Additionally, the School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) can be used to determine which schools use crime prevention strategies, procedures, and policies. The School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) has been conducted seven times: 1999-2000, 2003-2004, 2005-2006, 2007-2008, 2009-2010, 2015-2016, and 2017-2018. Definitions were added to the School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) for clarity regarding terms that were contained in the survey.

According to the School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018), for the purposes of this study, elementary schools were defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade Pre-K through Grade 3. Middle schools were defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade 4 through Grade 9 (School Survey on Crime and Safety, 2018). High schools were defined as the grade level for a school that has students enrolled within Grade 9 through Grade 12 and a highest grade level that is within Grade 10 and through Grade 12 (School Survey on

Crime and Safety, 2018). Specific survey questions from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime and Safety (2018) that were analyzed in this article include: (a) How often do problems with student bullying occur at your school?; (b) How often do problems with student sexual harassment of other students occur at your school?; and (c) How often do problems with student harassment of other students based on gender identity occur at your school? Participants responded with either Daily, Once a Week, Once a Month, Occasionally, or Never. Archival data were collected from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 National School Safety Dataset and converted to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) data (Field, 2018). A codebook was used to recode the data.

Results

For this investigation, Pearson chi-square procedures were conducted to determine the degree to which differences were present in other forms of harassment by school level. The statistical procedure was viewed as the optimal statistical procedure to use because frequency data were present for school level and for the three dependent variables: (a) student bullying; (b) student sexual harassment, and (c) student harassment based on gender identity. Because these variables were categorical, the chi-square analyses were the statistical procedure of choice (Slate & Rojas-LeBouef, 2011). In addition, with the large sample sizes, the available sample size per cell was more than five. Therefore, the assumptions for using a Pearson chi-square procedure were met.

For the first research question for the 2015-2016 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(8) = 94.62$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .15 (Cohen, 1988). Elementary schools reported daily bullying almost one half the rate that was reported at high schools. Middle schools reported the most daily

bullying incidents compared to elementary and high schools. Concerning the 2017-2018 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(8) = 188.46$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .19 (Cohen, 1988). Elementary schools reported daily bullying almost one half the rate that was reported by high schools. Middle school reported the most daily bullying incidents compared to elementary and high schools. Delineated in Table 4.1 are the descriptive statistics for these analyses. Illustrated in Figure 4.1 are the percentages for this survey item by school year.

Insert Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 about here

With regard to the second research question for the 2015-2016 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(8) = 350.21$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .29 (Cohen, 1988). Revealed in Table 4.2 are the descriptive statistics for elementary schools that reported occasional sexual harassment almost one half the percentage that was reported at high schools. Middle schools reported almost twice the amount for occasional sexual harassment incidents than elementary schools. Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 448.20$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .29 (Cohen, 1988). Occasional sexual harassment at elementary schools was one half the percentage at high schools. Middle schools reported almost twice the amount of incidents than elementary schools. Depicted in Figure 4.2 are these percentages by grade level.

Insert Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 about here

Concerning the third research question for the 2015-2016 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(8) = 242.99$, $p = .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .25 (Cohen, 1988). As revealed in Table 4.3, almost one half of high schools occasionally experienced student harassment based on gender identity compared to less than half of elementary and middle schools. Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(8) = 351.12$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .26 (Cohen, 1988). More than one half of high schools occasionally experienced student harassment based on gender identity compared to less than half of elementary and middle schools. Shown in Figure 4.3 are the percentages for this survey item by school level.

Insert Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3 about here

Discussion

Data regarding student bullying were obtained and analyzed from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety for two school years. Inferential statistical analyses revealed that student bullying incidents were statistically significantly different by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) for both the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. Elementary schools experienced half of the percentage of daily student bullying incidents compared to high schools for both school years. Middle schools

experienced the most daily student bullying incidents compared to elementary and high schools for both school years.

Incidents regarding student sexual harassments incidents were also statistically significant for both the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A consistent stair-step effect was observed in that high schools reported the most student sexual harassment incidents that occasionally happened. Middle schools reported the second most student sexual harassment incidents that occasionally happened. Elementary schools reported the least student sexual harassment incidents that occasionally happened.

In addition, occasional student harassment incidents based on gender identity were also statistically significant for both the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A consistent stair-step effect was observed in that high schools reported the most student harassment incidents based on gender identity. Middle schools provided the second most incidents based on gender identity. Elementary schools reported the least incidents based on gender identity.

In this investigation for two school years, elementary schools consistently reported incidents regarding student sexual harassments and student harassment based on gender identity that were statistically significant for both the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. Middle schools reported the second most incidents for harassment. High schools reported the most harassment incidents throughout the study.

Connections with Existing Literature

Established in this nationwide study were findings about student bullying and harassment at the elementary, middle, and high school level. In a previous article, Hornor (2018) agreed educators must address the frequency of harassment that may

proceed cybervictimization due to different forms of cyberbullying that have increased from digital technology use. Fahy et al. (2016) examined the extent of damage that other forms of cyberbullying (e.g., gossip and rumors) caused to the relationships and reputations of cybervictims. Sharma et al. (2017) determined that children who have experienced one or more kinds of harassment related to cyberbullying are more likely to have suicidal ideations.

Implications for Policy and for Practice

Based on the results of this study, several implications can be made for policy. First, policymakers should create student-friendly reporting practices for the elementary school level. Second, a district-wide student sexual harassment policy for all school levels with age-appropriate verbiage should be posted on school websites and printed for all school campuses. Third, teacher and parent response training should be held throughout the school district.

Implications for practice include school administrators and school counselors creating safe places where students can report harassment at each school level. Students are more likely to report harassment incidents if they have a healthy relationship with campus staff members. Parent initiatives should also be used at the campus level to provide parents with effective communication skills that are necessary for students to feel comfortable sharing traumatic experiences related to sexual harassment.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the results discussed in this article, several recommendations for future research can be made. First, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using more recent data. Second, researchers should determine the degree to which

differences might be present in discipline efforts that are limited by (a) inadequate/lack of teacher training, (b) inadequate/lack of parental support, (c) fear of student retaliation, and (d) inadequate funds by school level. The degree to which limited efforts reported from the national SSOCS affects cyberbullying is not known. Third, researchers should examine the degree to which cyberbullying teacher trainings differ by school level. Teachers must have buy-in during cyberbullying discipline policy drafting process to ensure proper use and response of strategies that may be used to deter cyberbully perpetrators.

Conclusion

Through inferential statistical analyses of national survey data, student sexual harassment at the elementary school level was reported at half the rate of middle school incidents. School leaders must have an adequate reporting system for students to report sexual harassment incidents that may affect their mental health. Campus leaders must also create a plan of action to decrease the rate of harassment incidents at all school levels. Student sexual harassment must be addressed at all school levels to sustain student mental health. Students benefit from effective reporting systems that are clearly communicated with the appropriate school personnel. Anonymous alert systems should be closely monitored and responded to in a timely manner.

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Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Student Bullying by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Level and School Year	Elementary *n* of schools	Middle *n* of schools	High *n* of schools
2015-2016			
Daily	(*n* = 9) 1.7%	(*n* = 38) 5.3%	(*n* = 27) 3.5%
Weekly	(*n* = 36) 7.0%	(*n* = 132) 18.4%	(*n* = 93) 12.0%
Monthly	(*n* = 80) 15.5%	(*n* = 167) 23.2%	(*n* = 165) 21.3%
Occasionally	(*n* = 362) 70.2%	(*n* = 376) 52.3%	(*n* = 473) 61.1%
Never	(*n* = 29) 5.6%	(*n* = 6) 0.8%	(*n* = 16) 63.6%
2017-2018			
Daily	(*n* = 12) 1.8%	(*n* = 73) 7.5%	(*n* = 39) 3.9%
Weekly	(*n* = 36) 7.0%	(*n* = 132) 18.4%	(*n* = 93) 12.0%
Monthly	(*n* = 99) 14.8%	(*n* = 224) 23.0%	(*n* = 213) 21.4%
Occasionally	(*n* = 463) 69.3%	(*n* = 455) 46.7%	(*n* = 14) 1.4%
Never	(*n* = 328) 7.2%	(*n* = 14) 1.4%	(*n* = 18) 1.8%

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Student Sexual Harassment by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Level and School Year	Elementary *n* of schools	Middle *n* of schools	High *n* of schools
2015-2016			
Daily	(*n* = 0) 0.0%	(*n* = 0) 0.0%	(*n* = 4) 0.5%
Weekly	(*n* = 0) 0.0%	(*n* = 17) 2.4%	(*n* = 15) 1.9%
Monthly	(*n* = 11) 2.1%	(*n* = 58) 8.1%	(*n* = 59) 7.6%
Occasionally	(*n* = 183) 35.5%	(*n* = 487) 67.7%	(*n* = 563) 72.7%
Never	(*n* = 322) 62.4%	(*n* = 157) 21.8%	(*n* = 133) 17.2%
2017-2018			
Daily	(*n* = 0) 0.0%	(*n* = 6) 0.6%	(*n* = 7) 0.7%
Weekly	(*n* = 3) 0.4%	(*n* = 28) 2.9%	(*n* = 21) 2.1%
Monthly	(*n* = 10) 1.5%	(*n* = 92) 9.4%	(*n* = 79) 7.9%
Occasionally	(*n* = 250) 37.3%	(*n* = 638) 65.4%	(*n* = 729) 73.1%
Never	(*n* = 408) 60.8%	(*n* = 211) 21.6%	(*n* = 161) 16.1%

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies and Percentages of Student Harassment Based on Gender Identity by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Level and School Year	Elementary *n* of schools	Middle *n* of schools	High *n* of schools
2015-2016			
Daily	(*n* = 0) 0.0%	(*n* = 0) 0.0%	(*n* = 2) 0.3%
Weekly	(*n* = 0) 0.0%	(*n* = 4) 0.6%	(*n* = 8) 1.0%
Monthly	(*n* = 1) 0.2%	(*n* = 11) 1.5%	(*n* = 20) 2.6%
Occasionally	(*n* = 48) 9.3%	(*n* = 227) 31.6%	(*n* = 367) 47.4%
Never	(*n* = 467) 90.5%	(*n* = 477) 66.3%	(*n* = 377) 48.7%
2017-2018			
Daily	(*n* = 0) 0.0%	(*n* = 1) 0.1%	(*n* = 3) 0.3%
Weekly	(*n* = 0) 0.0%	(*n* = 15) 1.5%	(*n* = 11) 1.1%
Monthly	(*n* = 3) 0.4%	(*n* = 31) 3.2%	(*n* = 29) 2.9%
Occasionally	(*n* = 78) 11.6%	(*n* = 415) 42.6%	(*n* = 521) 52.3%
Never	(*n* = 590) 87.9%	(*n* = 513) 52.6%	(*n* = 433) 43.4%

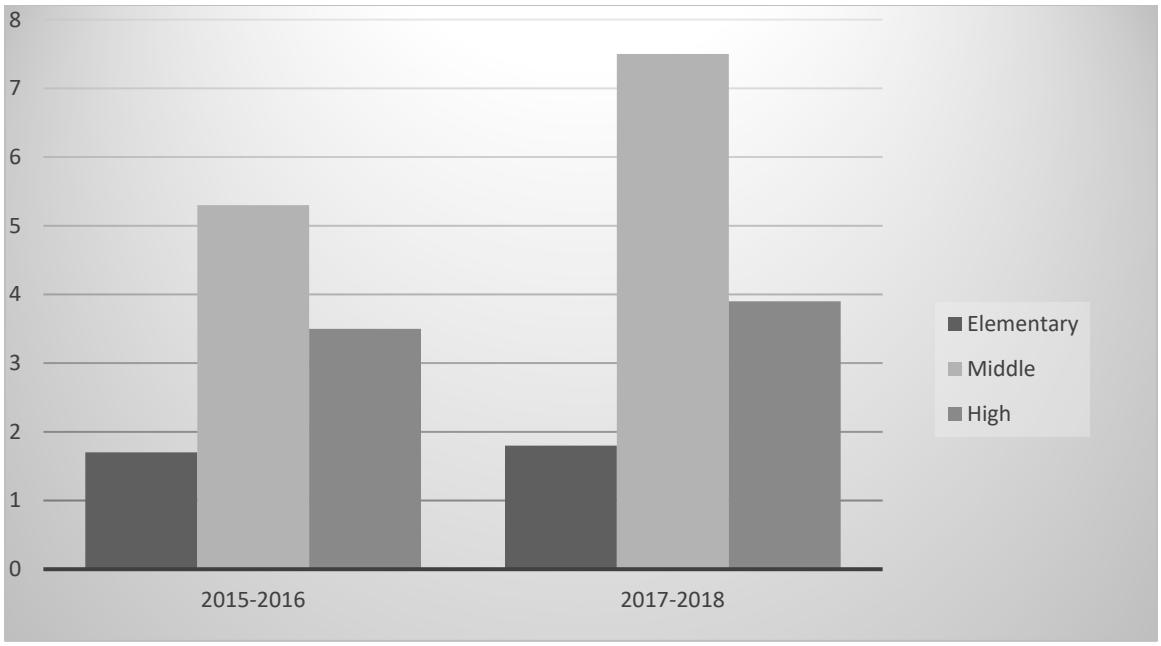

Figure 4.1. Daily student bullying by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

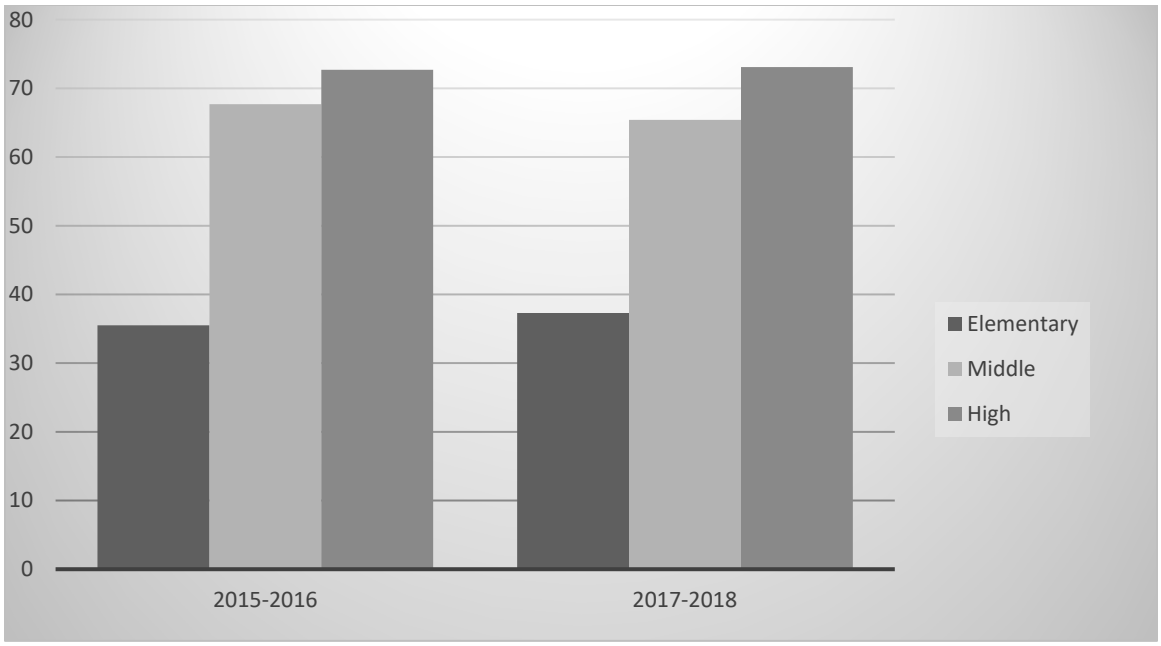

Figure 4.2. Occasional student sexual harassment by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

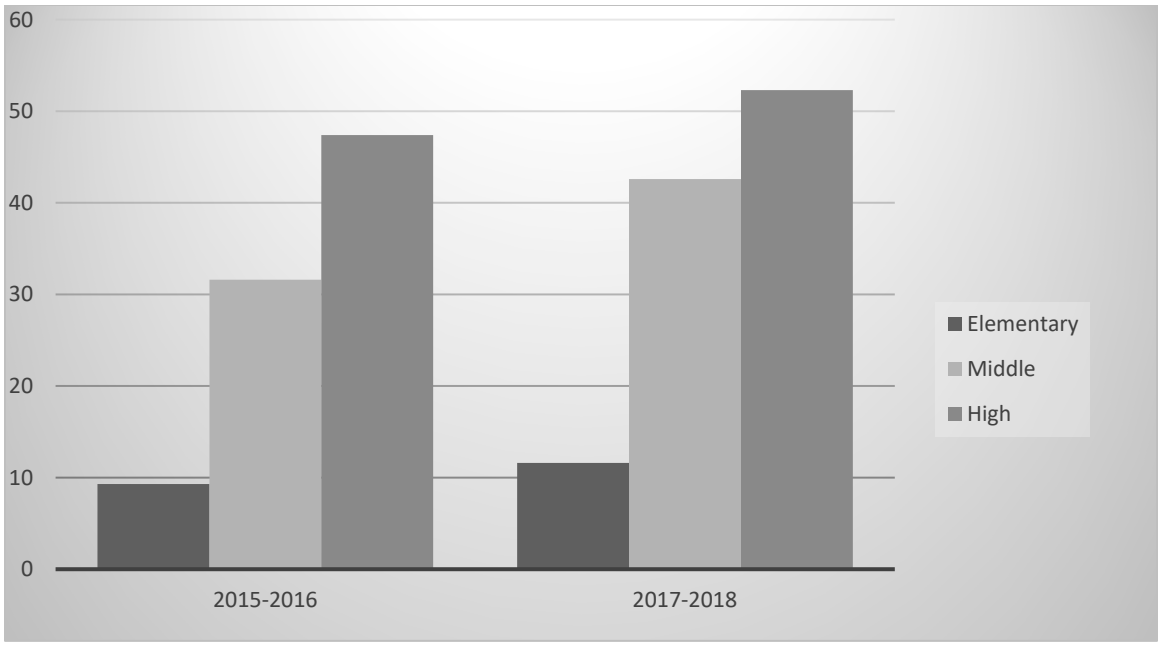

Figure 4.3. Occasional student harassment based on gender identity by school level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to determine the degree to which school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) was related to cyberbullying discipline efforts. In the first journal article, the effect of school level on teacher trainings was examined for discipline policies. In the second study, the extent to which school level was related to factors that impede discipline efforts was ascertained. In the third investigation, the relationship between school level and other forms of harassment was examined. In each of the three studies, two years of national archival data were examined to ascertain the degree to which consistencies were present in school discipline efforts and cyberbullying by school level. In this chapter, results across the three empirical studies will be summarized. Implications from these three studies for policy and for practice will be provided, along with recommendations for future research. A summary will conclude this chapter.

Summary of Article One Results

In the first article, teacher trainings that were offered to address discipline policies by school level were examined. Archival data for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were analyzed from the School Survey on Crime and Safety. The questionnaire included a variety of crime and safety topics (e.g., school practices and programs, school security staff, staff training and practices, incidents, parent and community involvement in school, school mental health services, and disciplinary policies). For elementary schools, cyberbullying teacher trainings were statistically significantly different for both school years. Over one third of elementary schools did not offer cyberbullying teacher

trainings for either school year compared to more than one fifth of middle schools and less than one third of high schools. Concerning teacher trainings for bullying behaviors, statistically significant differences were present in only one school year. In this school year, one fourth of elementary schools did not offer teacher trainings for student bullying behaviors. Less than one fourth of middle schools did not offer such trainings compared to more than one fourth of high schools. Regarding teacher trainings for school-wide discipline policies related to early warning signs of violent behavior, statistically significant differences were present in only one school year. In this school year, less than one half of elementary and high schools did not offer such teacher trainings compared to one half of middle schools. Table 5.1 contains a summary of these results.

Table 5.1

Descriptive Statistics for Summary of Teacher Trainings for Discipline Policies by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

Teacher Trainings by School Year	Outcome	Effect Size
Cyberbullying		
2015-2016	Significant	Small
2017-2018	Significant	Small
Intervention and Referral Strategies		
2015-2016	Not Significant	N/A
2017-2018	Not Significant	N/A
Early Warning Signs for Violent Behaviors		
2015-2016	Not Significant	N/A
2017-2018	Significant	Small
Bullying Behaviors		

2015-2016	Significant	Small
2017-2018	Not Significant	N/A

Summary of Article Two Results

In the second article, the effect of school level on efforts limited for discipline policies were examined. Archival data for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were analyzed from the School Survey on Crime and Safety. For elementary schools, efforts were severely limited by inadequate/lack of teacher training were statistically significantly different for both school years. Elementary and middle schools had almost twice the percentage of schools with discipline efforts that were limited in a major way by inadequate/lack of teacher trainings than high schools. Concerning efforts limited in a major way by fear of student retaliation, statistically significant differences were present for both school years. Elementary schools had the most discipline efforts that were limited by fear of student retaliation during the second school year. Table 5.2 contains a summary of these analyses.

Table 5.2

Descriptive Statistics for Summary of Limited Efforts by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

Limited Efforts by School Year	Outcome	Effect Size
Inadequate/Lack of Teacher Training		
2015-2016	Significant	Small
2017-2018	Significant	Small
Inadequate/Lack of Parent Support		
2015-2016	Not Significant	N/A
2017-2018	Not Significant	N/A
Fear of Student Retaliation		
2015-2016	Significant	Small
2017-2018	Significant	Small
Inadequate Funds		
2015-2016	Not Significant	N/A
2017-2018	Not Significant	N/A

Summary of Article Three Results

In the third article, the effect of school level on other forms of harassment were examined. Archival data for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were retrieved from the School Survey on Crime and Safety. Statistically significant differences were present for elementary schools in both school years for student bullying incidents. Elementary schools reported daily bullying almost one half the rate that was reported by high schools. Middle schools reported the most incidents for daily bullying. Concerning sexual harassment, statistically significant differences were present for both school years.

Elementary schools reported occasional sexual harassment almost one half the rate that was reported by high schools. Middle schools reported almost twice the amount of sexual harassment incidents compared to elementary schools. Regarding student sexual harassment on gender identity, statistically significant differences were present for both school years. Almost one half of high schools reported harassment on gender identity compared to less than one half of elementary schools. Elementary schools reported harassment on gender identity less than half the rate of middle schools. Revealed in Table 5.3 is the summary for these analyses.

Table 5.3

Descriptive Statistics for Summary of Other Forms of Harassment by School Level for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Years

Other Forms of Harassment by School Year	Outcome	Effect Size
Student Bullying		
2015-2016	Significant	Small
2017-2018	Significant	Small
Student Sexual Harassment		
2015-2016	Significant	Small
2017-2018	Significant	Small
Student Harassment on Gender Identity		
2015-2016	Significant	Small
2017-2018	Significant	Small

Summary of Results Across All Three Articles

Overall, 22 statistical analyses were conducted to determine the effect of school level on cyberbullying discipline efforts. Of these 22 analyses, 14 had statistically significant results in which discipline efforts were better in middle and high schools than in elementary schools. The statistically significant survey items for the 2015-2016 school year included teacher trainings for cyberbullying discipline policies, teacher trainings for bullying behaviors, efforts limited by inadequate/lack of teacher trainings, efforts limited by fear of student retaliation, student bullying, student sexual harassment of other students, and student harassment on gender identity. The statistically significant survey items for the 2017-2018 school year included teacher trainings for cyberbullying discipline policies, teacher trainings for bullying behaviors, efforts limited by inadequate/lack of teacher trainings, efforts limited by fear of student retaliation, student bullying, student sexual harassment of other students, and student harassment on gender identity. Eight statistical analyses of cyberbullying discipline efforts did not yield statically significant results. Survey items that were not statistically significant for the 2015-2016 school year included teacher trainings for intervention and referral strategies, teacher trainings for early warning signs of violent behaviors, efforts limited by inadequate/lack of parent support, and efforts limited by inadequate funds. Survey items that were not statistically significant for the 2017-2018 school year included teacher trainings for intervention and referral strategies, teacher trainings for bullying behaviors, efforts limited by inadequate/lack of parent support, and efforts limited by inadequate funds.

Although teacher trainings for early warning signs of deviant behaviors were least offered at the elementary school level for the 2015-2016 school year, teacher trainings for early warning signs of deviant behaviors were least offered at the middle school level for the 2017-2018 school year. Another survey item, teacher trainings for bullying behaviors, were least offered at other school levels other than elementary. Teacher trainings for bullying behaviors were least offered at the high school level for both the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years.

Regarding major efforts limited by fear of student retaliation, the elementary school level had the least incidents for the 2015-2016 school year and the most incidents for only the 2017-2018 school year. Considering other forms of harassment, daily bullying incidents were least reported by elementary schools for both school years. However, daily bullying incidents increased for the 2017-2018 school year. Occasional student sexual harassment of other students and student harassment based on gender identity were also least reported at the elementary level for the 2015-2016 school year and increased for the 2017-2018 school year.

Connections With Existing Literature

In this journal-ready investigation, findings for all three articles were consistent for elementary schools. For the first article, clearly established in this nationwide study are the analyses for the lack of teacher training at the elementary school level. Researchers (e.g., DePaolis & Williford, 2015) examined the prevalence of cyberbullying at the elementary school level. Results were consistent throughout the study regarding the lack of adequate teacher trainings for discipline policies at the elementary school level.

In the second article regarding impeding discipline efforts, clearly established in this study were findings about major factors for discipline efforts that were limited at the elementary school level. Researchers (e.g., Hinduja & Patchin, 2015; Tomczyk & Wloch 2019) have documented the need for educators to implement safety prevention efforts that will make school environments more conducive for learning. Additional researchers (Bartolo et al., 2019; Young et al., 2017) have examined failed mediating strategies from parents and their lack of support for discipline policies due to a reluctance to accept their child's wrongdoing.

Finally, clearly established in the third article concerning other forms of harassment in this nationwide study were findings about student bullying and harassment at the elementary, middle, and high school level. Researchers (e.g., Fahy et al., 2016; Hornor, 2018; Sharma et al., 2017) investigated different forms of cyberbullying that may affect student mental health. Fahy et al. (2016) examined the extent of harm that other forms of cyberbullying may cause. Hornor (2018) agreed educators should use resources to address the frequency of harassment that may proceed cybervictimization. Sharma et al. (2017) determined that children are more likely to have suicidal ideations if they have experienced one or more kinds of harassment related to cyberbullying incidents.

Implications for Policy and for Practice

Based on the results of this study, the following implications can be made for policy. With respect to policy implications, policymakers should use school data regarding crime and safety to create a tiered level of cyberbullying prevention and intervention trainings. The three-tiered method that should be used includes (a) strong reporting practices that are uniformed across all school campuses within school districts,

(b) thorough investigation of cyberbullying incident that includes details from both the cyberbully and the cybervictim, and (c) a mitigating protocol for counselors and administrators to use prior to the incident effect on student mental and socio-emotional health.

An additional implication for policy is the need for school boards to adopt universal policies regarding the definition of cyberbullying and discipline efforts that school leaders may use during teacher trainings at each school level. Preventative measures for cyberbullying incidents may be documented appropriately if the definition for cyberbullying was the same across the nation. Federal government officials must provide a definition that can be used by school districts and researchers to alleviate misconceptions.

A final policy implication is the need for legislators to implement awareness campaigns each school year and secure adequate funding for discipline efforts at all school levels. Annual conferences should be held with top experts who are familiar with anti-cyberbullying policies. Data regarding cyberbullying incidents should be analyzed and discussed to offer school districts evidence-based preventions and practice.

With respect to implications for practice, educational leaders should prioritize student social emotional learning. School administrators should use curriculum items that address empathetic beliefs and morals. If initiated at the elementary school level, prevention and intervention efforts that include social-emotional learning frameworks at elementary schools will decrease cyberbullying behaviors that may affect student mental health during middle school or high school. In addition, another implication for practice educational leaders can implement is teacher and parent involvement initiatives to

enhance support of cyberbullying discipline efforts by administrators as they receive teacher and parent buy-in for effective discipline plans. If school campus principals and/or administrators gather input from teachers regarding their professional development needs, teachers will be equipped to address incidents that occur off campus and on campus. Discipline efforts regarding cyberbullying will deter cyberbullying perpetrators who are engaged in behaviors.

Lastly, a final implication for practice includes cyberbullying professional development needs that must be reassessed by teachers and school leaders at all school levels. Professional development opportunities should include learning activities that allow students to discuss cyberethics. School leaders should provide teachers with opportunities to receive information that will allow them to effectively lead cyberbullying conversations.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of the three articles in this journal-ready dissertation add to the research that is available for the national SSOCS and cyberbullying discipline efforts. Several recommendations for future research can be made. First, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using more current data to determine if there are any trends for identified safety variables from the national School Survey on Crime and Safety. Second, further examination of impeding factors that may limit cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts at each school level should be conducted. Administrators and staff must be aware of additional factors that should be addressed as they adjust their plan of action for future cyberbullying incidents. Educators must use

effective prevention and intervention strategies at appropriate school levels to ensure the safety of all students.

Third, additional studies should be conducted about forms of harassment compared to cyberbullying to determine the extent to which relationships may exist between cyberbullying and other infractions that may interrupt safety intervention and prevention strategies at different school levels. In future studies, researchers should develop more detailed cyberbullying questionnaires that consist of more than a Yes/No format. Student data using a qualitative method may provide more insight regarding the need for early cyberbullying prevention and intervention at the elementary grade level.

Conclusion

The purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to determine the effect of school level on cyberbullying discipline policies. Results were varied across elementary schools compared to middle and high schools. Evidence existed in support of discipline efforts that were limited for the elementary school level compared to the middle school and high school levels. Teacher trainings for cyberbullying and social, physical, and verbal bullying behaviors were much less prevalent at the elementary school level than at the middle and high school levels for both school years. Although elementary schools received the least amount of teacher trainings for intervention and referral strategies and for early warning signs of violent behavior, a stair-step effect was present for the 2015-2016 school year due to similar rates at all school levels.

In addition, results were varied across elementary schools compared to middle and high schools regarding efforts limited in a major way by inadequate/lack of teacher training, inadequate/lack of parent support, and inadequate funds for both school years.

Elementary and middle schools had similar rates regarding efforts that were limited in a major way compared to the ladder school year with similar rates regarding limited efforts by inadequate/lack of teacher training for middle and high schools. Although elementary schools reported a higher rate of efforts that were limited in a major way by inadequate/lack of parent support for both school years, middle and high schools had similar rates for such efforts. Efforts were mostly limited by fear of student retaliation in a major way for elementary schools during the ladder school year.

Concerning other forms of harassment other than cyberbullying, middle and high schools reported more daily bullying incidents and occasional sexual harassment of other students and sexual harassment on gender identity for both school years. Middle schools reported the most daily bullying incidents followed by high schools and then elementary schools. Elementary schools reported almost half of the bullying incidents for high schools for both school years. High schools reported the most occasional sexual harassment of other students and sexual harassment on gender identity for both school years, followed by middle schools and then elementary schools. Elementary schools reported half of the rate of middle school incidents for student sexual harassment of other students. Although cyberbullying discipline efforts have been broadly investigated over the years, continued research regarding the prevalence of cyberbullying at the elementary school level is warranted due to the advancement of technology that may hinder discipline efforts at all school levels.

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APPENDIX

Sam Houston State University
A Member of The Texas State University System

Date: Oct 2, 2020 5:41 PM CDT

TO: Shukella Price Cynthia Martinez-Garcia
FROM: SHSU IRB
PROJECT TITLE: Differences in School Discipline Efforts and Cyberbullying by School Level: A National Analysis
PROTOCOL #: IRB-2020-295
SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial
ACTION: Exempt
DECISION DATE: October 2, 2020
EXEMPT REVIEW CATEGORY: Category 4. Secondary research for which consent is not required: Secondary research uses of identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens, if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(i) The identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens are publicly available;

(ii) Information, which may include information about biospecimens, is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, the investigator does not contact the subjects, and the investigator will not re-identify subjects;

(iii) The research involves only information collection and analysis involving the investigator's use of identifiable health information when that use is regulated under 45 CFR parts 160 and 164, subparts A and E, for the purposes of "health care operations" or "research" as those terms are defined at 45 CFR 164.501 or for "public health activities and purposes" as described under 45 CFR 164.512(b); or

(iv) The research is conducted by, or on behalf of, a Federal department or agency using government-generated or government-collected information obtained for nonresearch activities, if the research generates identifiable private information that is or will be maintained on information technology that is subject to and in compliance with section 208(b) of the E-Government Act of 2002, 44 U.S.C. 3501 note, if all of the identifiable private information collected, used, or generated as part of the activity will be maintained in systems of records subject to the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and, if applicable, the information used in the research was collected subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.

Greetings,

Thank you for your submission of Initial Review materials for this project. The Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

*** What should investigators do when considering changes to an exempt study that could make it nonexempt?**

It is the PI's responsibility to consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might make that study nonexempt human subjects research.

In this case, please make available sufficient information to the IRB so it can make a correct determination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include your project title and protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

VITA

Shukella L. Price

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

Doctorate of Education – Educational Leadership, Pending May 2021
Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX
Dissertation: Differences in School Discipline Efforts and Cyberbullying by School Level: A National Analysis

Master of Education, Educational Leadership
Lamar University, Beaumont, TX

Master of Arts in Teaching
Centenary College of Louisiana, Shreveport, LA

Bachelor of Science in Biology
Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Assistant Principal, Conroe ISD, July 2015-Present
Teacher - Biology, Klein ISD, August 2014-June 2015
Teacher - Biology, Spring ISD, August 2008-June 2014
Teacher - Science, Caddo Parish, August 2006-June 2008

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2020, February 3. Member. Student Advisory Committee for Doctoral Program Evaluation. Department of Educational Leadership. Sam Houston State University

RECOGNITIONS

Assistant Principal of the Year Nominee, Conroe HS, Conroe ISD, 2019-2020
Humanitarian of the Year Nominee, Conroe HS, Conroe ISD, 2019-2020
Teacher of the Year, Dekaney High School, Spring ISD, 2012-2013

SCHOLARLY RESEARCH ACTIVITY
PUBLICATIONS

Price, S. (2019). Student-led culture change. *Edutopia*. Retrieved from https://www.edutopia.org/article/student-led-culture-change

Price, S. L. & Slate, J. R. (2019). Principal tenure and elementary school distinction designations in Texas: Experience clearly matters. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. (*1*)1. 24-28. Retrieved from http://www.humanitiesjournals.com/archives/2019.v1.i1.A.4

STATE/NATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Price, S. L. (2011, June). *Quadrant D leadership*. Presented at the annual Model School Conference, International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE), Nashville, TN.

Price, S. L. (2019, September). *Principal tenure and elementary school distinction designations in Texas: Experience clearly matters*. Paper presented at the annual conference of Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration (TCPEA), Dallas, TX.

Price, S. L. (2020, November). *Differences in Cyberbullying Efforts by Elementary School Size*. Presented at the Universal Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), Virtual.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Universal Council for Educational Administration, (UCEA), 2019-Present
Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration (TCPEA), 2019-Present
Textbook and Academic Authors Association (TAA), 2018-Present
Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP), 2015-Present